

Sweet and Bitter

by Red Rose Inc

Category: Hakuoki/è-„æ;æé-¼

Genre: Hurt-Comfort, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Hijikata T., Kazama C., Okita S., Saito H.

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Summary: AU: What if the Shinsengumi's battles had gone a little differently, what if they had retreated to the defensible Island of Hokkaido before The New Government forces got a foothold there? How would their relationships be? Who would they meet and how would they live out their lives? Who would they fall in love with? And just what if that love was a forbidden one? Rated for Lemons.

## 1. The False Front Begins

Disclaimer: We do not own Hakuoki.

Title: Sweet and Bitter

>Category: AnimeManga Â» Hakuoki

>Authors: Mrs. Hijikata and Yu<br>Language: English

>Rating: Rated: M<br>Genre: Hurt/Comfort/Romance

>Published: 829/14

\*\*\_Red Rose Inc. Presents...\_\*\*

\*\*\_Sweet and Bitter

><em>\*\*

\*\*\_Starring Mrs. Hijikata as Hijikata Toshizo\_\*\*

><strong><em>And<em>\*\*

><strong><em>Yu starring as Saito Hajime<em>\*\*

\*\*\_Additional characters also played by Mrs. Hijikata and Yu\_\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>It was early in the morning. The birds were singing their morning song and everything was shining by the morning-dew that was sticking on the leaves, petals and the webs of spiders. It was begin spring and the garden of the Shinsengumi was filled with flowers and fresh

green from the bushes. A part of the garden was surrounded by soft pink cherry blossoms.<p>

Under the tree, next to the water source was a man with black hair as the night itself, taking a bath. He stood there in his undergarment and let slid the chilly water over his chest. His skin that was soft colored like a young peach was shining as well by the left behind water drops.

The were slowly sliding down like they were discovering his skin, slowly over his chest...and then over his abdomen... slowly further down. Hijikata threw another bucket of water over him, his wet hair, loosened and sticking on his back. He loved morning baths. It refreshed him and his mind. It was quit... the captains were still sleeping and Hijikata had the garden for his own. He looked at his arms and muscles, yes, his body was in a lovely shape.

Just returning from a long patrol Saito was greeted with a group of women giggling and fawning over something near the gates of the headquarters and walking closer he slowly began to realize it was a group of Hijikata's fangirls, all holding letters declaring their love and hoping for a chance at his affections. It irritated him to no end to find all the women here, falling over themselves just to catch a glimpse of the famed Demon Vice Commander. A low resigned sigh left him and he cleared his throat, drawing the attention of the women.

"You will need to leave. You are interfering with Shinsengumi business." He informed and the women looked upset as they quickly put their letters and gifts of flowers and various things near the gates and hurried away like a pack of hens fleeing.

Saito picked up the bundle of letters left by the women and headed inside, despite his desire to burn the letters and be rid of them he instead would give them to Hijikata, since really they did belong to him as gifts. He dismissed his men and headed around back with the intention of cleaning the enemy blood off him from those rogues he had slain only just earlier, when he turned the corner he choked and averted his eyes abruptly.

"Ah, Vice Commander I... I apologize f-for intruding. I didn't know that you were here at this time." The usually stoic man had a faint color of pink dusting his cheeks in embarrassment, unable to get the correct words out.

' ' Aah Saito. You can come. Everything right while patrolling?' ' asked Hijikata while he put his hair together in a tail.

"Yes, we dispatched a group of rogues without incident or injury." He paused momentarily, getting the words together, cautiously. "Also... a group of clucking hens brought these for you..." The faint irritation in his voice over the matter was unusually clear.

Hijikata sighs. ' ' I don't have time for this nonsense. Safety of the town comes first.' ' said Hijikata as he put his Hakama on. His upper body was still wet. He took the letters and looked at Saito. ' '... Saito...' ' he said softly...

"That's good. I think that you should throw them away so as not to

encourage them." Saito sighed. "If they had it their way they would follow you around even into battle I think."

Hijikata stepped forward. '' Yea... ...Saito... did you hurt yourself?'' he asked a bit worried.

Saito glanced down at himself and checked over his uniform, it was hard to tell, he hadn't thought so, but then again you didn't always feel a wound right away. "I... don't believe it is my own blood..."

Hijikata lifted his hand up and stroke his thumb over his cheek, wiping off some blood of his skin. His thumb lingered some seconds longer while Hijikata stared at him. When he saw there was no cut he smiled faintly. '' No, it is not yours.''

"I hadn't thought so. I'll return to my duties."

'' Alright. Breakfast will be done soon.''

"Very well. I will be there shortly once I have finished my report of the patrol."

Hijikata nodded and put his haori on and went back to the house. He walked towards the main room for the breakfast was coming.

"Hijikata, your women were back today." Called a familiar troublesome voice, which belonged to a sly fox like smile.

'' Souji... they aren't my woman. I never claimed them.''' he sighs as he sat down.

"But Hijikata you could have your own harem. I bet you could even talk them into a threesome. A little girl on girl action." Souji leaned back, amused.

A vein popped by Hijikata's head. '' Souji... have some modesty will you?''

"What? You can't tell me that isn't exciting."

'' I don't want to know what's going on in that head of yours.''' he said with a irritated sigh.

"Pft, if that doesn't excite you what does? Guy on guy action?"

He stiffened a bit. Where was that coming from?

Souji raised a brow. "Hm... no... "SOUJI STOP THINKING LIKE THAT! Grrr!" type thing? Maybe that is your thing. The vice commander going against his own rules. You'll have to commit seppuku I guess."

'' It's not like that, Souji.''' he growled. '' Japan is at war and I don't have time for any romance... I don't mind a nice Maiko but things comes first and that is peace.''

"Hijikata... you're so boring. At least make up a juicy story about your time with a Maiko." Souji sighed with disappointment. "Maybe Hajime-kun has more interesting things to say."

' I had plenty...' he grumbled.

' Ohyea.. that time when we were in the Sakura Inn was steamy.' grinned Sanosuke when he came in and sat down. 'Hijikata really don't want to talk about that one.'

"Oh, tell me. I want to hear details." Souji sat forward with interest.

Hijikata kept grumbling. ' Well, I was there with Hijikata and Shinpachi and we had a bunch of young Maiko's. And there was one... well, she was quite interested in our Demon Vice Commander.'

"Did they disappear into a backroom together?" Souji wiggled his brows suggestively.

' Hell no, it happened before our nose. He was that drunk and suddenly he pulls the girl on his lap and kissed her neck.'

"Well what do you know. Something interesting." Souji mused. "Let's hear more about it."

"Let's not." Saito said, stepping in, having finished his report. "The Vice Commander has a right to his privacy."

Sanosuke grinned. Hijikata sighs. ' Thank you, Saito.' said Hijikata as he sipped from his soup. Saito sat down carefully near Souji and

Souji sighed. "How about you Hajime-kun? Any interesting moments happen to you today?" At that Saito actually pressed his lips together in a thin line, a faint frown. Well... he wasn't about to mention walking in on Hijikata by mistake. He would never live that one down.

' Morning all!' shouted Heisuke as he walked in. Hijikata was eating his fish and hoped Saito didn't mention his bathing time. It was his private time.

"Hold that thought Heisuke, I asked Hajime-kun if he had any interesting times today and he made a face." Souji said.

"No such thing happened." Saito replied, glanced away. "I was merely thinking of the rogue samurai who's head was removed from his shoulders."

' Aaahh.. why get Saito all the action?' whined Heisuke and start with his fish. Hijikata look at him.

' Do you think slicing up rogue samurai is fun?' he asked. ' Not in that way, Hijikata-san. But when I am on patrol with Sannan-san, nothing happens.' said Heisuke.

' Well, you even missed the harem before the gate for Hijikata.' said Sanosuke and Heisuke almost spit his fish out. ' Again! Man, why not for me!'

"Next time join me on patrol then! I get tons of action!" Shinpachi gloated from his corner, eying Heisuke's plate in the meantime.

' ' Sure thing! And stop staring at my plate, Shinpatsu.' ' said Heisuke when he finished his fish.

"Hey, that is the price of coming on patrol with me. Besides you're smaller than me." Shinpachi justified.

"How about your exploits with the ladies Shinpachi? Surely you have something interesting." Souji mused.

Shinpachi smirked. "Well..."

"You waste a lot of time talking about women." Saito mentioned off handedly.

' ' Aah come on, Saito. We all know you are clumsy with woman. Doesn't mean we are.' ' said Sanosuke.

Saito only sighed. "I have no interest in women. There are much more important things to be doing then wasting time on them."

Everyone stopped eating except Hijikata. ' ' Saito-kun is right.' ' said Kondo stepping in. ' ' Morning all.' '

"So who do you have an interest in?" Shinpachi asked through a mouthful.

"Morning Kondo." A bit of rice flew as he spoke.

' ' Knowing Saito... swords.' ' said Heisuke.

"Maybe he's interested in men." Shinpachi laughed, joking. And Saito merely averted his eyes in irritation, causing Souji to slowly inch away from him uneasily.

' ' In men?' ' said Kondo and look to Saito. ' ' Naah... Saito is just being serious.' '

' ' But what if he is...' ' said Sanosuke.

"Wait, you don't suppose..." Shinpachi also paled considerably.

' ' Knock it off!!!' ' said Hijikata suddenly. ' ' Saito is doing his work and well. Focusing on what needs to be done. Take an example from him.' '

' ' Hijikata-kun is right.' ' said Sannan, also eating. ' ' Even I have it busy. The Shinsengumi needs to be focused on it's goal.' '

"Hm, you are quite defensive Hijikata." Souji stated. "Come to think of it neither of you are interested in women..."

Hijikata snapped his chopsticks, he was losing patience.

Shinpachi jumped and winced. "Oh... okay... look at the time... I think it's my turn for patrol."

Aka, he was running from the danger.

Souji wasn't.

"You look quite angry, Hijikata."

Hijikata stood up and walked out of the room. The nonsense already! He had better things to do like writing the important people and other administration. Saito also finished his meal and also left, not particularly wanting to hear them talk and Souji leaned even more forward.

"Interesting. He didn't defend himself."

Sanosuke and Heisuke were grinning . '' Souji found something to amuse himself with.'' said Sanosuke.

Shinpachi finally sat back down, seeing as he didn't have to run since Hijikata left and he was safe from his wrath. But his face grew dark. "We may be joking about it now, but you guys all know that's against the rules. Even if it's a captain or the vice commander there's no exemptions."

'' That's true so please stop about it before it goes wrong.'' said Kondo worried. '' I can't lose Toshi nor Saito-kun.''

Souji quieted down with Kondo's intervention. The only thing that could ever put him on a leash and keep him from running wild. "But what if it were true?" Souji asked.

'' Then it will be a huge problem for the Shinsengumi and for them.'' said Kondo.

"Let's just keep this quiet between the captains here. No need to start a rumor that we don't even know is true." Shinpachi said.

Kondo agreed with Shinpachi. '' Yes. It won't help with Toshi's mood as well.'' said Kondo. '' He is working like crazy to get things done.''

"I'll head out on patrol now. Heisuke you coming?" Shinpachi asked.

'' Ohyea that I am!'' said Heisuke and walked away to get his uniform.

"Don't wait up for us." Shinpachi stated, hinting that he'd probably go drinking after his patrol.

'' Then I go to do my work as well.'' said Sannan and stood up.

'' Aaahh Shinpachi, what about me?'' asked Sanosuke.

"You want to come with?"

'' of course, I want fun with you and Heisuke.'' said Sanosuke with one of his charming smile.

"I guess we'll be out pretty late with the three of us then." Shinpachi said, crossing his arms behind his head. "Well let's get going. Think you two can handle an all nighter?"

' ' Tsk... Shinpachi... I got more experience then you do.' ' said Sanosuke.

"Heh! We'll just see about that!"

They went off and Kondo look at Souji. ' ' So.. and what are you plans for today, Souji?' ' asked Kondo.

"I was planning to shove suggestive magazines under Hajime-kun's futon again." Souji answered, smiling with amusement.

' ' I see. When you are done, you can help me with some stuff.' '

"I can always do that later. We didn't have desert yet." Souji said.

' ' Souji..are you suggesting some dango with some tea? I don't mind that.' '

"That is exactly what I'm suggesting."

' ' Alright then. I believe Inoue just bought some fresh.' '

Suddenly a messenger ran up to Kondo, panting and out of breath to deliver the news. "Commander, a letter from Aizu has arrived for you!"

' ' really?' ' said Kondo and took the letter and start to read.

"They need reinforcements immediately."

' ' Souji, call the others..' ' said Kondo as he quickly stepped to his own room to prepare.

"So much for that tea." Souji said, quickly going to gather everyone. Saito he had turned in his report, intending to get some rest after the long day, so that he would be able to preform his duties and his late night patrol tonight when Souji came to him and informed him of the situation and Hijikata was thinking behind his desk and rubbed his temple. Thinking how his refreshing morning was a waste thanks to Souji and his ridiculous jokes when he received the news.

Everyone quickly gathered their squads and reported to Kondo in the main hall.

"I've sent a messenger for Shinpachi." Souji informed Kondo as he returned with his men.

' ' alright.' ' Everyone... Aizu needs our help.' ' said Kondo with pride.

"Do we know regarding what?" Saito questioned.

' ' Something about the Chosu.' '

Saito nodded in understanding, faintly surprised Aizu was actually making this request from a group they were not fully sure of.

' ' Chosu is organizing a way to push over the Aizu-clan,we all know that. It is a nice thing that the Aizu requested us.' ' said

Kondo.

"Then we stop them right?" Souji asked, just as Sanosuke, Shinpachi and Heisuke came inside.

' ' We heard the news, problems it seems.' ' said Sanosuke.

"Who's heads are we busting?" Shinpachi asked.

' ' Chose ones it seems.' ' said Heisuke.

"Well what are we waiting for! Let's go bust them up!"

' ' Easy, easy... They're at the Kawashiwa Inn. Those has a door at the front but also at the back so we need to split up.' ' said Kondo.

"Hit 'em from both sides! I like it!"

' ' Shinpatsu...' ' sighs Heisuke and Sanosuke was grinning.

' 'Shinpachi, Sanosuke and Heisuke, take the back. Souji, Toshi and Saito take the front. Sannan-san, take the ones who are feeling.' ' said Kondo.

"Alright! Let's get ready!" Shinpachi was ready for a fight, already excited.

They made their way to the Inn, feeling this was the moment that their group would finally make a name for itself. On the streets, people were hiding or fleeing when they saw the Wolves of Mibu. Shinpachi placed his sword over one shoulder. "Hmp, we'll show them who the top dogs are around here."

' ' Yea..!' ' said Heisuke.

Sanosuke and Heisuke went to the back and the others in the front. Kondo loudly and blatantly stated that the Shinsengumi was present.

Further away Hijikata was walking next to Saito.

"I hope that Kondo will be cautious." Saito mentioned, knowing how he could be sometimes.

' ' Yea, me too.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' If this goes well, we are a step further.' '

He kept his hand at the hilt of his blade, waiting cautiously. Anything could happen tonight, he had to make sure to do his duty no matter what, but for some reason he didn't have a good feeling. Saito furrowed his brow, yeah, something was off about this situation.

' ' Why is it so quiet?' ' wondered Hijikata.

"I am unsure."

' ' You two.' ' said Hijikata to two samurai. ' ' Open the door and look if something is going on there.' '



Saito squeezed a hand over his sword and stepped a little in front of Hijikata to protect him just in case, prepared for anything. The opened the door and a dead body fell down on the streets. Saito stepped forward quickly, into his draw stance. Hijikata was focusing on the black hole as suddenly a samurai charged outside. Saito shoved Hijikata aside with a shoulder and drew his weapon faster than the blink of an eye. Behind them footsteps came running, Yamazaki was there a little distance away.

Hijikata drew his weapon as well and sliced another samurai down.

"Hijikata!" Yamazaki called. "Kondo and the rest are in trouble! Hurry an finish these guys!"

' ' Dammit!' 'said Hijikata. ' ' Saito! Clear it out with the others. I take my squad to help Kondo.' '

Hijikata ran towards Kondo's location to help him. Yamazaki drew his blade, helping Saito take care of the common rabble within the small building and Saito was in a hurry to clear it out, not liking not being with everyone else in case something went wrong. To Yamazaki and Saito it appeared the building was completely cleared of enemy. But what were they doing here?

"I think that is all. Let us quickly return to the Vice Commander." Saito said, giving his blade a good swing to shake off some blood before sheathing it. Saito went inside to check for any hidden plans and Yamazaki backed up to the door to watch the outside for him. He wanted to be quick, but he also needed to be careful and check everything here, as it seemed there was nothing and both men hurried to the location to help their comrades.

Meanwhile Kondo and Hijikata were fighting together. Aizu was not present which make it harder but Hijikata gave his name honor and fought like a demon, while Souji made his way up the stairs, scowling when finding a few dead comrades up here. Dammit. That was when a chill went up his spine, something was strange here. Souji aburptly turned to find the glow of eyes, like that of an animal before he was knocked across the room. Souji turned to fight and block the surefire deathblow that came from behind, but suddenly a coughing fit got to him and sent him to his knees.

Heisuke kicked another Chosu samurai away and slit his throat open with ease.

Sanosuke felt that someone was watching him and stayed focused. Sanosuke jumped away suddenly when someone started shooting at him.

' ' No greeting first?' ' he asked. The figure jumped away and Sanosuke scoffed. Inside the bulding Heisuke had come to Souji's aid to defend against the attacker but found that they had disappeared. Heisuke and cleared the path and sat next to Souji.

Inside the building Heisuke was with Souji. Souji wiped the bloody hand he coughed into on his pants and cleared his throat, leaning on his blade.

' ' Are you alright?' ' Heisuke asked.

"Fine, but I wish I knew what attacked me just then... or where it went..."

' ' You had the same?' ' asked Sanosuke as he climbed the stairs. ' ' Something was shooting on me and when I looked it was gone.' '

"I actually thought I was done for." Souji admitted, he glanced up when he noticed Saito cautiously coming up, Yamazaki trailing behind him. They had finally arrived there. "Still plenty of fighting Hajime-kun, don't worry you haven't missed it."

' ' Hey... where is Hijikata?' ' asked Heisuke.

"The Vice Commander is missing?" Saito asked, worry evident in his voice, which Souji took notice of.

' ' Kondo is gone too.' ' said Sanosuke. Meanwhile Kondo and Hijikata were still fighting.

That last comment had Souji forcing himself onto his feet abruptly. "We need to find them."

"Souji, you're injured, so remain on the sidelines." Saito told him and Souji gritted his teeth in frustration at being told to stay on the sidelines.

' ' I will take him back to the headquarters. Shinpachi, go with Saito. Sanosuke and Heisuke goes with me.' ' said Sannan.

Shinpachi nodded, hiding his hand behind his back and taking a few steps backwards. "Right. Got it."

"Shinpachi..." Saito began, frowning. "Go back with Sannan. Let Sanosuke come with us instead."

"No way it's just a little bitty spider bite!" Shinpachi argued.

' ' Shinpachi... go with Sannan.' ' said Sanosuke and went stood next to Saito.

Shinpachi sighed and held his hand up, a cut so bad between his first finger and thumb he was wondering if maybe his he'd lose his thumb completely.

"I'll keep watch."

' ' Alright. Inoue can threat you.' ' said Sannan and took the squads back.

Sanosuke look to Saito. ' ' let's go find our commanders.

Saito nodded and kept his hand by his blade, in a hurry and Shinpachi sighed while watching them go, irritated that this stopped him.

Kondo held off a large group of enemies, his arm cut and wounded, while Hijikata was protecting the commander so he could make a quick backwards retreat to safety. ' ' You bunch of bastards...' ' scolded

Hijikata to the several samurai. On his way back Kondo saw Saito and Sanosuke.

' ' Sanosuke! Saito! Toshi needs help.' ' he said while he held his arm and the two sprinted past him off to Hijikata's rescue.

Hijikata had slaughtered some samurai. He Himself had a bleeding lip and a small cut on his hand.

"Vice commander, are you alright?" Saito asked in a hurry, moving to his side to help protect his flank.

' ' Yea... just a scratch. Is Kondo-san safe?' ' asked Hijikata.

"He is."

' ' Good.' ' said Hijikata as he sliced another samurai.

Yamazaki kept his distance, but also kept their flank covered as soon as he arrived from another door, watching Saito take out a few men before speaking.

"We need to finish up here quickly and regroup."

Hijikata finished the last ones. ' ' alright, done! let's go back.' ' said Hijikata.

Saito put his blade away seeing there were no more threats, except upon stepping outside he noticed that finally officials had arrived. Too late at that. They already lost some good men.

' ' You are late.' ' stated Hijikata.

Shinpachi walked up behind them as well, about to make a comment, but Saito jabbed him with the sheathe of his blade to shut him up before making a fool of himself and their organization. Shinpachi winced and rubbed the spot at his side, but got the point so to speak.

' ' I apologize for that but what happened here?' ' asked the commander. ' 'We chased the Chosu away like the Aizu-leader asked that from us.' ' said Hijikata.

' ' But you were the back-up.' ' said the leader.

"Just the backup?" Shinpachi finally got a word out, irritated clearly by that.

' ' well this back-up cleared up the mess before the main group arrived.' ' said Hijikata, defending his group.

"Maybe if your men had shown up sooner our guys would still all be alive!" Shinpachi added.

The commander couldn't think of an excuse so he ordered to clear the inn from the dead bodies of the Chosu. The Shinsengumi would take their own men. As they gathered the bodies, even Shinpachi had no words for the situation, it was terrible to lose so many good men.

They had finally arrived back and Inoue was had treated Souji and

Shinpachi and was now busy with Kondo. Hijikata was in his own room, cleaning his lip. Saito, despite a long day of fighting was preparing for his nightly patrol. He was unable to risk anything happening on his watch even if it had been a long and tiring day. Especially with many injured men.

' ' Saito, are you there?' ' asked Hijikata outside.

"Yes. Is there something you require, Vice Commander?" He finished cleaning his blade and set it aside.

Hijikata came in. ' ' Do you have an extra bandage? Inoue is still busy with the others.' '

He opened a drawer and picked up a roll. "Yes."

' ' Thank you.' ' he said. ' ' I need to bandage my hand.' '

"It would be difficult to do one handed, allow me to help."

Hijikata smiled faintly. ' ' Thank you.' ' he said once again and sat down.

"Have you cleaned it yet?"

' ' No, not yet. Cleaned up my lip first.' '

Saito slowly got up and gathered a few supplies, before carefully cleaning and bandaging the injury for him. As with everything else, perfection in all things was applied to even bandaging. "It is a deep wound, be weary of it."

' ' I know. You were right on time.' ' said Hijikata.

"I'm glad I was able to assist."

' ' Are you alright?' ' asked Hijikata.

"Yes. I managed to avoid injury." Saito replied. "I will be taking an extra patrol tonight."

' ' That is not needed. Sanosuke and Sannan are taking over. You need to rest.' '

"With so many of our own injured or dead, there need to be more patrolling."

' ' We have sended a message to Aizu that they should keep an eye as well. I can't let you go after your hard work. You earned some rest.' '

"If I patrol tonight as well, all the more welcomed that rest will be once I return."

Hijikata came closer to Saito. ' ' Are you ignoring my order, Saito?' ' he said softly.

"I... no... of course not. It is only... that we need more patrols... Souji is not well and Shinpachi is also injured as well as Kondo himself and even you, Vice Commander are injured. Those of us that

are not must step up in our work."

' I still have Inoue and Sannan-san. Saito, you are very important...to...me... to the Shinsengumi.'

Saito was silent for a long moment, seemingly surprised to hear such a confession, from the demon vice commander of all people, before nodding. "I understand. I will rest and then go on patrol after sleeping properly."

' Thank you.' said Hijikata and stood up. He stood in the opening of the door. ' Rest well, Saito.'

"You as well."

Hijikata gave Saito one of his rare smiles and left off. Saito decided it was best to obey orders and get some rest, he would start out again early the next morning. In the background Heisuke saw what happened and oh yes... someone needed to know.

'Souji, are you awake?'

"Who's there... and why do you ask?" The voice was cautious, strangely so.

' It's me Heisuke.. I saw something and thought well...'

"Saw what?" The door to Souji's room very slowly slid open as Souji's interest peaked.

Heisuke came in his room and closed the door. ' Hijikata and Saito...'

Souji did a double take, not sure if he heard it right. "... you saw what exactly...?"

' Saito was bandaging Hijikata's hand and they were talking. Suddenly Hijikata came closer to Saito and said something and made Saito blush a bit.'

"... you don't say..." Souji became suspicious, perhaps it was time to question Saito.

' Creepiest thing ever, Hijikata smiled in a strange way to Saito.'

"..." Souji actually had no response for a few moments. "I know... tomorrow on patrol... you and I will go with... and we'll introduce Hajime-kun to women... if there's no reaction... we know for sure."

' Alright.' said Heisuke but was thinking. ' What about the demon?'

"We'll use the same tactic on his patrol... come to think of it... I always thought it was strange Hajime-kun didn't even blink at those books I stuff under his futon..."

' Hijikata tossed them right away out...' stated Heisuke.

"This is going to need extensive testing. Starting tomorrow. But... if it doesn't happen to turn out that way... we should keep it to ourselves... I don't want Hajime-kun to have to gut himself you know."

' ' I know...' ' said Heisuke.

"Tomorrow then. Let's plan on it."

' ' Yes. We can go to Naru's Inn. The babes are hot there.' '

"Good idea."

' ' Okay. So you take him with you right?'

"I will. Actually... let's get them there together. Then we can see who they prefer."

Heisuke was grinning. ' ' Alright.' '

"Hurry and get some rest so we can catch them. Hajime-kun is an early bird."

' ' Roger!'

Souji fluffed his pillow and dropped back into bed. Tomorrow would be interesting and entertaining.

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><p>The battle continues next chapter...<p>

## 2. To Hokkaido

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><p>It was next morning and Hijikata was refreshing himself with a wet cloth by the source. Souji leaned around a corner, stalking Saito as he prepared to leave for patrol while Heisuke was already at the Inn, making a reservation for a room.<p>

"Hey, Hajime-kun after this let's have a drink. We should invite Hijikata as well. The Vice Commander could use a little relaxing don't you think?" Souji said, slinging an arm around Saito's shoulder's to which Saito gave a skeptical look.

"Perhaps a drink after patrol will be relaxing, but good luck getting the Vice Commander to agree." Saito answered.

"Just wait for a minute and I'll ask." Souji assured him, watching while Saito took his men and headed off on their patrol.

All day Souji eagerly awaited the time for their trap to find out the truth once and for all and once patrols had ended he quickly headed to Hijikata's office. "Oi, Hijikata! Come for a drink with us!" He called it loudly down the halls.

Hijikata look up and then to his work... well, he had finished it. '' Alright.'' he answered.

"... that was easy."

Hijikata came along with Souji. '' I don't mind a cup or two.'' he said.

"Alright, this is great." Souji looked very eager and excited.

'' So.. were are we going?''

"It's a surprise."

Hijikata scowled a bit.

"Come on, come on. Hajime-kun is going too."

'' Okay, okay.'' said Hijikata. He had worked really really hard these weeks and he could use a drink, even if he couldn't hold his liquor. Souji was unable to hide the devious look on his face, the plan was all falling together. It seemed that by the end of the night they would find out what's what.

'' Souji... I hope you're not planning to go to the red light district?'' asked Hijikata.

"Of course not."

'' Okay. That's fine then.'' said Hijikata and looked around in town.

Souji lead Hijikata to the place, hoping Heisuke had everything in place by the time they got there.

'' Souji! Saito! Hijikata-san!'' called Heisuke.

"Heisuke, good to see you." Souji smirked.

' ' Thanks! I got the best room! And I was lucky! I was asking for two maiko's but I got four instead, it's from the house!'

"Why would we need any Maiko?" Saito questioned, not seeming to be amused.

' ' The sake, Saito!'

"It's just as well to pour my own-" Before he finished Souji put an arm around his shoulder.

"Hajime-kun... don't tell me you would rather a guy pour your sake over a beautiful Maiko."

Saito merely sighed, deciding it best not to bother with arguing against Souji... and also not starting rumors as they had tried the other night.

' ' We got them free so why not using the price?' said Hijikata.

"Hm, Hijikata seems enthusiastic about having some Maiko." Souji mused, grinning like a fox, while Saito didn't seem quite so amused, rather perhaps a bit bothered by the prospect.

Hijikata was sighing, sometimes... Souji...

"Maybe this time I'll get to see Hijikata in action with a Maiko... hmmm..?"

' ' Souji...' said Hijikata with a glare.

"You think it will happen Heisuke?" Souji questioned, instigating him into the matter as well.

' ' Who knows, Souji... after all.. Demon Vice Commander can't hold his liquor...' he smirked and Hijikata glared at him.

"This will be an interesting night certainly."

Souji dropped into a relaxed seated position and leaned back on the wall easily, while Saito sat as usual more formally. Hijikata and Heisuke sat down and as they sat down Mikaku, the head of the Maiko's came in with three other Maiko's. The maiko's came sitting next to them and filled their cup.

Hijikata took a drink and sighed. ' ' Eehhh... that hit the spot.'

"So tell me are you ladies single?" Souji questioned, getting the ball rolling.

They start giggling. ' ' Yes, we are...'

"Mmm, you hear that Hijikata? Hajime-kun?" Souji was glad they were taking his comment in stride.

' ' So? You know my answer... Souji.'

"Is it the answer I'm hoping for?" Souji questioned.



Hijikata raised a brow as he sipped again. Heisuke had fun with the young maiko. '' So... how old you may be?'' asked Heisuke.

"And your names. How about your names?" Souji added, nudging Saito with his elbow and making him spill a bit of his drink, which earned Souji a terrible glare of irritation.

'' I am Osen... and this is my twin sister Chizuru. And this girl is our niece Kosuzu.'' said Osen.

Souji suddenly gasped and choked on his drink. "Oh, Hijikata do you hear that? Twins. This day couldn't possibly get any better."

'' So what? Do you need two woman to let fill your drink?'' he said and started with his second cup.

"They can certainly fill something."

It was Hijikata turn to choked in his drink and Heisuke burst out laughing.

"Hajime-kun, you haven't even batted an eyelash. Don't tell me the rumors about you two are true..." Now that the trap had been baited, Souji awaited an answer.

Heisuke glanced at Souji... How would this go? Saito merely glanced at Hijikata for a brief moment before taking a drink, as he himself personally refused to answer Souji's question. Chizuru held the bottle while her other held her sleeve, showing a piece of the skin of her wrist, an seducing view. Something what Maiko's had to learn.

Souji smiled in amusement. "You've got an admirer Hijikata."

'' I hear that alot.'' he said with red cheeks, already tipsy. Heisuke laughed. '' He really can't hold his liquor!''

Saito raised a brow. "You shouldn't exploit the vice commander."

'' Aah come on, it is just us.'' said Heisuke.

"Are you trying to set up the vice commander with some woman?" Saito questioned and Souji smirked, giving away that was indeed his plan and if not... well... they knew which way Hijikata swung the sword then.

'' I don't need them...yet.'' said Hijikata, busy with his fourth cup.

Heisuke heard the word yet... '' Ooh? What was that, Hijikata-san?''

Saito frowned faintly and averted his eyes, which Souji had noticed and eventually Hijikata had finished his first bottle and was drunk.

'' So... Hijikata... who do you love?'' asked Heisuke with a grin. Hijikata was thinking...

Saito sighed and took a drink, knowing that these two were definitely up to no good. He should have turned down this little invite the second he was asked.

'' I like Kondo-san... and Souji... and Saito...'' he hiccuped a bit. '' Saito...'' said Hijikata and lean in to him, hanging on his shoulder. '' You a good guy...'' he said with a red face. Heisuke almost choked in his sake from laughing.

Saito pressed his lips together in a thin line and set his cup down. Well, this certainly was not a good situation, having Hijikata drunk and having Souji and Heisuke trying to use that to pry into his personal thoughts.

'' Hijikata-sama, your sake.'' said Chizuru. Hijikata went back to his place and stared at Chizuru. '' Thank you.'' he said and finished his 9th cup.

"Mmm." Saito made a sound akin to a growl, not seeming to be happy at all with that Maiko that was practically begging Hijikata to jump her.

"You don't sound happy Hajime-kun, have another drink."

"No thank you."

'' Saito-sama, do you prefer maybe some tea instead?'' asked Kimuku.

"No, it's fine." Despite not being happy at the moment over the woman fawning over Hijikata, he wasn't about to be rude to the poor Maiko.

Hijikata fell asleep and hang over Chizuru. '' Hijikata-sama, please wake up.'' she said while stopping him from falling on her.

"Awe. He's having fun. Just look at him." Souji grinned.

'' He is sleeping.'' said Chizuru. Osen helped Chizuru and lay Hijikata down.

'' Damn, he is completely gone.'' said Heisuke. He was looking at Hijikata. '' It is the first time, I've sees Hijikata-san relaxed sleeping. If he sleeps, he is always so tensed.''

"Seems to be all thanks to Chizuru here." Souji teased, keeping an eye on Saito's reaction.

'' I-I-I d-din't do anything special.'' Chizuru responded.

Saito merely took another drink and averted his eyes, subtle, but a clear sign that he wasn't happy and this Souji noticed.

Hijikata rolled on his side, close to Saito and sighs deep. '' Osen, can you get a blanket for our customer?'' asked Mikuku.

"No. We'll go then, since our Demon Vice Commander can't handle his sake." Souji stated, standing up slowly.

'' I am not going to carry him!'' said Heisuke.

"Looks like it's up to Hajime-kun." Souji replied.

' ' Yes.' ' said Heisuke. Hijikata was still sleeping.

Saito sighed. "And the reason this task falls solely upon myself?"

"You're the only one not drunk enough to drop him." Souji replied.

' ' Souji is right about that.' ' said Heisuke as he stood up with a red face.

Saito set his unfinished drink aside and lifted Hijikata's arm over one shoulder, the sooner the returned the better. They went back to the headquarters. Sanosuke and Shinpachi were guarding the gate until everyone had returned.

' ' Oi, Shinpachi... do I see things or?' ' Sano questioned.

"Yeah. It looks like they had fun without us!" Shinpachi replied unhappily.

Sanosuke then noticed Hijikata's state. ' ' What is this? The demon has been tamed?' '

"He almost had his way with a Maiko again too." Souji added.

"That's simply not true." Saito defended their unconscious vice commander stoically.

' ' Really? Did he touch her?' ' asked Sanosuke.

"More like the other way around."

' ' No really? Someone was trying to flirt with the demon?' ' laughed Sanosuke. Saito carried Hijikata off to his room so he could sleep, deciding he was out of this sort of conversation, it was as if it were one between a bunch of school girls.

' ' Naah, Hijikata attacked the maiko in his sleep, hanging all over her.' ' said Heisuke.

"She wasn't opposed to it." Souji threw in.

Sanosuke look at Shinpachi. "You didn't invite us?!" Shinpachi asked, upset.

' ' Let's go inside first.' ' said Heisuke.

"Next time I hope we get an invite Souji." Shinpachi said, putting his sword over his shoulder and sighing. When they were inside and it was safe, Heisuke told to Shinpachi and Sanosuke that it was to get a reaction between Hijikata and Saito.

"A reaction?" Shinpachi asked, crossing his arms. "That's a dangerous thing to do. There's no way our Vice Commander would be into that sort of thing."

' ' Indeed. He is a ladiesman, even he won't show.' ' said Sanosuke.

"Are you sure about that?" Souji asked.

' ' Do you really think he will write down the rule about gay if he is gay? I don't think so..' ' said Sanosuke.

"Hm... so then... are you saying only Hajime-kun is?" Souji set a hand on his chin. "Or maybe the rule is only a cover for himself."

' ' Come on Souji, Shinpachi and I are also very close but we are clearly not gay.' ' said Sanosuke.

"..." Souji went silent, now suspecting, but the men shortly parted ways to return to their duties.

Hijikata was mumbling something in his sleep. Saito glanced at him and hurried him to his room where he set him down on his futon. Hijikata sighed and mumbled something that sounded like thank you. If Hijikata were awake, there was no doubt he would see the disappointment in Saito's face over the things which had transpired this evening. Indeed he regretted agreeing to drink with Souji, it was a mistake.

Hijikata woke up and held his head before he stood up and ran outside and threw up. He did it this time, drinking too much. Saito paused and remained standing where he was, not sure if it was fine to leave yet or not, before leaving briefly with a wet cloth. Hijikata puked again and held his head.

He knelt near Hijikata and held it against his head. "I'll retrieve Sannan for you."

Hijikata held him by his sleeve. ' ' No... Just you...' '

Saito glanced to his sleeve and then to Hijikata. "What is it you require then?"

Hijikata went again and when he found his breath. ' ' My... first drawer... family medicine... some tea...' '

"Ah. Of course." He grabbed the package and headed to the kitchen to prepare it. Hijikata wiped his mouth and went back to his room and sat down. His head was spinning like crazy. Souji sat nearby after finishing the conversation with the guys, just watching the situation unfold as Saito returned with the tea for Hijikata. Hijikata was leaning his head in his hand.

"Here you are Vice Commander." Saito handed the drink to him.

Hijikata took it from him and took some sips. ' ' My head...' '

"Is there anything else?"

' ' Just stay for a bit. The world is spinning...' ' said Hijikata and fell forward. Saito reached forward and caught him before he fell. "You should finish your tea and lie down."

Hijikata's head was on his shoulder. '' Yea...I will..'' he said. Hijikata was pulling his strength together and drank from his tea, finishing it.

Saito nodded as he stood up and headed to the door, but before he opened it he stopped. "Vice Commander... the Maiko girl... is that the type of person you like?"

'' Maybe... Don't know, she was pretty... even if she was kind of clumsy.''

"I see." He opened the door to leave. "Please excuse me."

'' But no woman now, there is a war. I spent my time better with you then with some woman, she can be assassin. From you, I know only loyalty.''

"Thank you Vice Commander. I appreciate your trust in me."

'' No problem. Now get some rest.''

Saito left the room and closed the door behind him, heading out to his own room.

Sometime later during the night, when everyone had finally settled in to rest after such a long day... a cannon went off, exploding in the distance and shaking the ground, effectively taking away any chance at rest.

'' Wake up everyone!'' called Kondo.

Shinpachi stumbled out of his room, pulling a boot on. "I heard it, I heard it!"

Sanosuke and Heisuke was changing themselves as well quickly. Saito was already ready and taking his squad out to the meeting room, waiting to receive orders. The others came as well with their squads. Hijikata came in. Shinpachi hurried in as well, finishing pulling on his cloak.

'' Heisuke you go with Shinpachi. Souji goes with Sanosuke. I will go with Hijikata and Saito goes with extra people. We will spread out and surround the enemy.''

"Alright! Head smashing time!" Shinpachi as always looked excited to fight.

The Shinsengumi divisions headed out, all the people on the streets standing aside and watching in awe, having more respect for them after the incident at the Inn when they stopped the rogue samurai. Saito gathered his men and attempted to take the hill where the cannons were firing on them from, but unfortunately their many attempts had grown more and more unsuccessful and Saito decided he was losing too many men to attempt it again. He sent back some of his men to find a suitable place to take the injured, which happened to be the Inn with the Maiko, they would force the women to be nurses for their injured. There was no other choice. It became the unofficial field hospital.

Souji took cover behind a wall, pinned down by a Gatling gun. "This is no good. What do we do Sano?"

' I have no idea. I had thought that the Aizu would join as well.' said Sanosuke. ' We need someone who can sneak behind them...' he said and then he heard a yell as Hijikata sliced the men behind the Gatling gun. ' Leave it to the Demon to take some lives.'

"Nice job Hijikata." Souji stated, stepping out with his men. "Except there are a lot of these things and none of our men have any guns so let's get moving."

Hijikata went up ahead further with Kondo and they fought their way through the western weapons. On their flank Heisuke lured some enemies in a trap so his squad and Shinpachi's finished them off.

"Hah! They don't stand a chance!" Shinpachi gloated.

' Nope. Idiots. This goes well, Shinpachi!'

Souji suddenly dropped to his knees, breaking into a coughing fit.

Sanosuke rubbed his back. ' Oi, are you getting sick while fighting?'

"Tch, I'm fine." Except he continued cough up more blood, trying his best to fight off the coughing, but failing.

' Oi, oi. This is not good.' said Sanosuke.

"We will have to take him to the inn..." The voice belonged to Saito, he returned bloody, cloak torn and burnt here and there and with very few and very injured men left. "Aizu has ordered us to fall back..."

' Alright. I see Heisuke there as well with Shinpachi.' said Sanosuke and helped Souji up.

"I can still fight..." Souji coughed out.

' Ohno, you don't. What if Kondo-san sees you like this? He will get worried and that will distract him.' said Sanosuke.

"I will get the word to the Vice Commander and Kondo that Aizu has requested us to fall back." Saito told him. "Souji there is no reason to remain against orders. Fall back."

It seemed to convince Souji and he gave in, too weak to struggle anymore.

Kondo came back running. ' I heard the word from the Aizu so I came back.' he panted.

"Unfortunately..." Saito answered, it was difficult to say that he had failed them in taking the hill, but the entire hill top was surrounded all the way in a circle with cannons and Gatling guns, making it nearly impossible.

' ' That hill is so strongly defended.' ' said Heisuke. ' ' We couldn't go through it.' '

' ' Where is Toshi?' ' asked Kondo suddenly.

Shinpachi kicked a stone across the street in frustration of the failure. "Dunno, last I knew he was with you Kondo."

' ' I know. He said he had a plan...' ' said Kondo.

Then one of Hijikata's members came down running. ' ' Help, Hijikata-san is wounded and we need more back-up at the flank on the hill.' ' So it had appeared even Hijikata himself was unable to take the hill. It seemed truly impossible and hopeless now.

"Let me help." Souji struggled.

' ' No, Souji...' ' said Kondo. ' ' Saito, back him up with your group. Take a look on Toshi...' '

"I..." Saito glanced at the few men he had left with guilt. He needed more men, but how could he request more men to give their lives when he had been let many men die already?

' ' I will help.' ' said Sanosuke. ' ' I am the one with the most energy left.' ' And handed Souji over to Kondo. Saito nodded to accept his help and rallied what was left of his men. With Sano's help and his men it was possible for a rescue mission at the very least.

' ' Then we shall go to the Inn.' ' said Kondo. Souji coughed more, trying to cover it up and act fine, but really he wasn't doing well at all.

' ' What are you hiding for me, Souji?' ' asked Kondo while walking to the In..

"There's nothing... I'm fine. Don't worry..."

When they arrived at the inn, the maiko's were busy with the injured. They gave the captains a big room where they were getting help and could rest. Shinpachi had decided to head up with his men along with Saito and Sano not wanting something to happen due to him not being there. The fighting was harsh and blood, but they were able to retrieve Hijikata and his squad, or the remainders as Aizu and took over. An Aizu soldier scoffed at them in passing.

"No wonder they couldn't take the hill, their men are incompetent, wearing their sword on the wrong side even." It was an obvious insult to Saito, but he was more concerned with Hijikata's condition as Sanosuke was carrying Hijikata back down the hill towards the inn.

' ' Or because some soldiers here are weak like a limp noodle.' ' scolded Sanosuke back. ' ' let's go to the Inn, Hijikata-san need first aid.' '

"That was my first concern." Saito replied, glancing at the next group of Aizu soldiers that passed him. These men had no idea what they were marching into on that hill.

' ' It's still full of enemies.' ' said Sanosuke to Saito. ' ' But if they want to, go ahead.' '

They went in the inn and Sanosuke lay Hijikata on a futon and opened his haori. He had taken a bullet in his shoulder and was stabbed here and there by this knives that was added on those guns.

"Is there someone that can assist us?" Saito asked over the loud noises of the Inn, wanting someone that could tend to Hijikata as soon as possible.

Chizuru came quickly with a clean bowl of water and clothes and first aid supplies. ' ' I need someone's help as well, I need to remove the bullet and he will go struggle.' ' she said.

"I will hold him then."

' ' Alright.' ' she said and put a lamp above her. When she went into his wound, he made a terrible painful face and was indeed struggling. Sanosuke held his legs still.

"Hold strong Vice Commander." Saito stated, grabbing his arms to keep him from moving too much.

' ' The bullet shattered in some pieces.' ' said Chizuru when she found the first piece and went to go for the second one. Hijikata was groaning from the pain.

"Need some extra muscle?" Shinpachi asked flexing a little.

' ' Hold his waist please.' ' said Chizuru. Hijikata was panting and opened his eyes, seeing Saito above him.

"Got him." Shinpachi replied.

Chizuru went deeper and Hijikata groaned loader. ' ' Just four pieces to go.' ' she said.

' ' Four?!' ' shouted Heisuke.

' ' Toshi, what were you thinking?' ' said Kondo serious and even angry in a way.

Saito remained silent and calm, though under the skin he couldn't help but be worried about Hijikata. When Chizuru was done, she gave Hijikata stitches and bandaged him. Osen came with a clean bowl of water and lukewarm tea.

' ' One of the guys need to wash the blood off and I have tea for everyone. I need Chizuru by other injured people.' '

"I will take care of him." Saito responded, letting the rest of the men return to more important duties. He also glanced over, wondering how Souji was doing.

Kondo was sitting next Souji, keeping an eye on him. Souji coughed briefly, looking towards the opening door to see if he knew any of the men being brought in... and he did...

"Th-"A cough cut him off. "That's the guy that attacked me!" He



pointed to the blond, smug looking guy and his companions that had just entered. Heisuke held his weapon ready and Kondo as well.

"Such hostility. I'm only here to visit my fiancée Osen and give your little group your orders from your precious Aizu. Bukufu dogs."

Osen came and hit him with her fan. "' Chikage, be nice to them. Don't mind him, he had a bad day.'" she excused Kazama in front of them.

Kazama growled and rubbed his head. "I am being nice, sparing their pitiful legs the pain of walking to receive their orders."

"' Ooh shush. And you won't attack them anymore, they are excellent customers of the inn.'" said Osen.

"... did you serve any of them...?" That sound in Kazama's voice... was the sound of jealousy.

"' Yes, I did with my sister and niece.'" she said. "' They were behaving and paid very well.'"

He grumbled under his breath about killing someone as he reached into his sleeve and pulled out a letter to hand to them. "These are your orders, retreat to the Hakkaido island and hold the position before the Government forces can get a foothold." He paused.

Kondo nodded. "' We need to travel Souji and Toshi careful to the ship.'"

"My men will help in that aspect... on the promise that you will not lay a hand on my wife nor put your indecent eyes on her ever again."

"' That's alright. We promise.'" said Kondo and the others nodded in agreement. Hijikata grimaced... He heard what they were saying... moving around... but if it was needed...

"Excellent. The ships will arrive in three days time."

Chizuru came in again and had some painkillers for Souji and gave it to him. Then she went to Hijikata and gave some to him as well. Hijikata coughed it in but he took it. Saito gathered up his blade and prepared to set up a guard outside the building, if it would take quite some amount of time for the ships to arrive for their transportation they may need to defend this Inn until then.

Not much later Hijikata woke up and sat up right away. He looked around, it seems everyone was sleeping, except Saito who remained loyal by his side as he had slept. Hijikata touched Saito's shoulder, he felt better than before and stood, he needed to take a leak.

"Vice Commander where are you going?"

"' Saito... I need.. you know...'"

"I will get someone to assist you."

"' Thank you.'"

He found one of the ladies and informed them Hijikata needed help, while he went to check on Souji next, but it seemed for the moment he was asleep.

"Is Souji doing well?"

' ' Yes, he is resting.' ' said Kondo.

"Have they discovered what his illness is?" Saito asked, despite the fact that he was already well aware of what was wrong with Souji. He just didn't want to say it outloud. Souji had always been his best friend and it was a shame to see him in this condition.

' ' No, but I know what he has. It hurts me to see him like this. He is like a son to me.' '

"It would seem Souji's fighting days have reached their end."

' ' he will be my adviser. Together we will work things out so he don't need to fight. The more rest he gets, the better it will be for his body.' '

"It could be he would enjoy that, being able to spend more time with you."

' ' You think so?' ' smiled Kondo and pet Souji's head. Hijikata came back and sat down on his futon.

"I believe so. Now please excuse me Commander, I will set up a short patrol so that we will not be taken by surprise should the enemy push forward to this position."

And so time went by that it was early in the morning. It had been a very difficult night and several men had died due to their wounds and those not dead or injured too badly so as to be out of the fight were terribly tired from patrolling all night.

Hijikata stood next to Saito. ' ' How was the night?' ' he asked

"So far the Aizu forces are holding, however... it would seem that they have not been able to gain ground." Saito paused for a moment. "I will do my best to assist them."

' ' Just... No nevermind...' ' said Hijikata. Saito watched him for a long moment, curious, but he wasn't the type of person to pry into another persons thoughts. ' ' You are a splendid samurai. You way of using your sword, I admire that. From the beginning... I accepted you in the group. I can't have it when you are away for some long time...' ' he confessed.

The hardness of his eyes softened and he looked faintly surprise.

"Are you asking me to remain here with the Shinsengumi and not travel with Aizu? Give me my order and I will fulfill it no matter what it is."

' ' Hajime-kun...stay with us.' ' said Hijikata softly and look at him with honest eyes that he needed Saito.

"Then I will remain here with you, Hijikata." In a very rare moment,

he broke formalities and thanked Hijikata for making him feel needed here from the bottom of his heart, even if he didn't exactly say that very thing in words.

'' Saito..'' said Hijikata, his cheeks even turning slightly red by this sudden action and Saito averted his eyes, suddenly too nervous to think up something else to say. Hijikata put his hand on his shoulder. '' Thank you, Saito. We can't do this... without you.''

"You... probably could do fine."

Hijikata sighes and grabbed his other shoulder as well and put his forehead on his and whispers: '' Saito... you are my arms and legs. And not only for me but for Kondo, Souji and the others. And to me you are a loyal friend.''

"Th-that..." Saito didn't know what to say really, all his life he had only been looked down upon for a left handed stance, not needed.

He look at Saito. '' Have more faith in yourself because I've got lots faith in you.''

"I'll do my best for you."

'' Good.''' said Hijikata. Then Osen and Chizuru came with breakfast.

"Ah, it's time for you to eat." Saito took a step back, aside from that he needed to see if the men on guard needed to be relieved.

'' For you as well. You there, give my friend also his breakfast.''' said Hijikata to Chizuru and she nodded.

Saito held up a hand. "No. The food is scarce and the wounded are in need of it more than myself." Hijikata lift his bowl with rice and put the half into the pickle bowl. the other half of the pickle bowl went into the other rice bowl. He cut the fish in half and put it on the bowl and gave it to Saito.

"Vice Commander it's more important you eat what you can get. It's fine." He pushed the bowl back to him.

'' What did I told about you? I don't mind sharing it with you.''' he said.

"If you weren't injured it would be different."

'' I order you to take it.''

"Mmm." He pressed his lips together in a thin line, but took the bowl. Of course, why did he not expect it? Hijikata knew he couldn't disobey if it were an order.

'' I don't want to send anyone to a battlefield with an empty stomach.''' he said and started to eat. Meanwhile Sanosuke was staring at them. Same for Heisuke. Shinpachi sat in a corner glancing, but not bothering to say a word about it.

'' What do we need to think of that?'' wondered Heisuke.

"Nothing." Shinpachi said, standing up and picking up his sword.  
"Comeon Saito! We've got to patrol."

'' Shinpatsu, shall I eat your fish?'' asked Heisuke.

"I was saving it for anyone injured that's still hungry. They need it more than we do Heiskue. Saito is right." Shinpachi replied.

Heisuke stopped eating and picked up his sword as well. '' I will patrol the other side.''

"Good thinking."

Saito hurried and grabbed his weapon as well, heading out with the rest while Hijikata slowly got up from his bed and made his way over to lay next to Souji.

'' Kondo-san, stretch your legs a bit. I keep an eye on him.''  
Hijikata said and Kondo nodded, slowly getting up with a few pops of his joints here and there.

"Who says I wanna look at your ugly mug." Souji questioned, trying to joke despite his weak state.

'' Maybe it gives the strength to get up.''' smirked Hijikata.

"It just might."

'' And admit, I am handsome.''' he teased.

"In your dreams." Souji struggled to sit up. Hijikata helped him up and sat half behind him to give him support.

"I need to get back out there... they need my help."

'' Ooh no, Kondo-san and the others are very worried. Even I am worried.''

"I'm fine."

Hijikata felt his head. '' You have a slight fever.''' he said.

"It's nothing." Souji tried to argue still.

Hijikata pulled him in a hug. '' Kondo-san sees you as his son. He wants you to rest.''

Souji coughed and weakly laughed. "Hijikata you pervert get off me."

'' Pervert? Off you? You are just shy.''' he laughed softly.

Souji sniffed and rubbed at his eyes. "Just what are we going to do... since we have to retreat all the way to some island?"

'' Maybe a day off? I don't know what we can expect yet.''

"Feels weird... retreating like that."

' ' I know.' ' he said and he felt Souji relaxing in his arms. He smiled. He could understand why Kondo liked him.

"But I guess if the Aizu thinks that's the only way to win the fight..." Souji paused for a moment. "Actually... I don't even care what Aizu wants... I don't care about Aizu... I only care about Kondo. I'll just follow Kondo. That's all I need to be happy."

' ' That's all? Even when a young maiko seduces you?'

"That's an added bonus." Souji smiled faintly, but then it disappeared. "Hijikata... I'm going to die aren't I? You have to take care of Kondo for me."

Hijikata swallowed and pulled him deeper in a hug. ' ' Don't say it, Souji. Don't say. Don't jinx yourself.'

"I'm so tired..."

' ' The rest. I will do everything to make you better.'

Still, Souji was losing hope. He really didn't think he was going to make it and he wanted to fight until the end so that he could at least die a warrior that would make Kondo proud.

' ' Maybe we can found a doctor for you there. If you losing hope, I will hold your hope.' ' said Hijikata.

"If you really think so."

' ' If...? There's no doubt.' ' said Hijikata.

Shinpachi continued walking and stopped suddenly upon noticing dark smoke in the distance, he breathed in and took in a smokey smell. It wasn't gun powder or cannon fire... this was wood burning.

"Oh no..." Shinpachi watched the distance flames, having no doubt that soon they would spread into their location. Very soon. And the ships that Aizu was sending for them were not yet here. By the time Kazama's men arrived to help their retreat to those ships, they would be too late, and find only a whole lot of charred bodies left.

Saito glanced towards the area as well. "They've set fire to the city. We must gather our injured and the women and get them to the boats early. They aren't safe here."

Just as he spoke a large group of Aizu troops were in a hurried retreat.

"Where are you going? We must hold this position so that the injured men may retreat." Saito said, standing in their path.

"Stand aside, boy!" The leader said, sounding winded and panicked.

' 'Who's a boy?'' said a voice suddenly. It was Hijikata with the group, starting to move out the injured and nurses. They must have smelled the smoke as well and realized it was time to go.

"Tell your boy to stand down." The Aizu leader ordered.

' ' He is not a boy, he is man like you.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' And we need the ship to help the women and children retreat.' ' said Hijikata. The group had the woman from the Inn and some children. ' ' We, the Shinsengumi are guiding them.' '

"Then take them, we are also retreating. They received reinforcements just as we had thought we pushed them back." Though, he looked skeptically at Saito being called a man, he still looked young. Not to mention his eyes took in Saito's sword being on the 'wrong' side.

"Alright, go ahead and leave, Saito and I... we're going to cover the Commander and Vice commanders retreat while they get the women and children out." Shinsachi said, putting his sword over his shoulder. "We can take them on our own."

The Aizu troops felt their pride had been hurt and so they gave up their retreat momentarily to stand with Saito and Shinsachi in holding off the enemies until the women and children were safe on the Aizu soldier's ship, as with the loss of many of their numbers, there would now be enough room for them all. Hijikata brought more woman and children on the boat and looked around.

Saito and Shinsachi were trying to hurry out elders, women and children from their homes and onto the ship as well, because soon everything would be burned to the ground and burning would be a terrible way to go.

"Here they come!" Called the Aizu scout on the roof, as he saw their enemies approaching.

\* \* \*

><p>The battle continues next chapter...<p>

### 3. Trouble in Paradise

Disclaimer: We do not own Hakuoki.

Title: Sweet and Bitter

>Category: AnimeManga Â» Hakuoki

>Authors: Mrs. Hijikata and Yu<br>Language: English

>Rating: Rated: M<br>Genre: Hurt/Comfort/Romance

>Published:<p>

\*\*\_Red Rose Inc. Presents...\_\*\*

\*\*\_Sweet and Bitter

><em>\*\*

\*\*\_Starring Mrs. Hijikata as Hijikata Toshizo\_\*\*

><strong><em>And<em>\*\*

><strong><em>Yu starring as Saito Hajime<em>\*\*

\*\*\_Additional characters also played by Mrs. Hijikata and Yu\_\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"Here they come!" Called the Aizu scout on the roof, as he saw their enemies approaching, kneeling with his rifle and firing at the enemies charging their position.<p>

' ' Saito! Shinpachi! On the boat! Now!' ' said Hijikata.

Shinpachi and Saito were doing their best with the Aizu soldiers to keep the enemies at a good distance, slowly moving backwards the boats, but the enemies were slowly closing in on their flanks.

"Shinpachi!" Saito warned of the enemy at his back, which he hadn't noticed and Saito knew he couldn't hear through the gunfire the warning, so he lifted his sword, tossing it like a spear into the man behind him, which drew Shinpachi's attention to Saito who also had an enemy coming up on him.

Shinpachi started to hurry forward just as the samurai sliced Saito in the right arm, when he stumbled over something, noticing the rifle he picked it up and fired, the bullet just barely missing Saito and cutting into the enemy samurai's flesh.

"Come on! Let's get back there!" Shinpachi rallied the retreat.

' ' Come on! Saito! Shinatsu!' ' called Heisuke.

' ' Toshi is backing you up!' ' called Kondo.

Saito and Shinpachi made it to the docks, helping the Aizu men onto the ship with them, not willing to leave a single man behind.

And that was when Saito noticed a man, shot in the knee go down. He absolutely refused to leave the man and went back for him, lifting him over a shoulder and starting to help him limp towards the ship.

"Quickly. Quickly." Saito urged the injured man to hurry.

Sannan-san was looking. ' ' Hijikata-san, help Saito. I will back you up.' ' he said. Hijikata nodded and Sannan threw an emergency Smoke bomb he had created some time ago for this very sort of situation.

Hijikata gave his support at the other side of the wounded man. ' ' let's go, Saito. Sannan-san helped us.' '

Shinpachi grabbed them and pulled them aboard. "Alright! Hurry and get this thing moving!"

Hijikata pulled the bridge inside and the boat moved. Saito kneeled near the man and tore a part of the man's sleeve off to wrap it over his knee tightly and stop the bleeding, when he stood Shinpachi patted his shoulder and handed him his sword.

"I picked up your sword for you."

"Do me another favor and never touch a rifle again without proper

training." Saito replied, taking his sword and cleaning it off.

Shinpachi laughed nervously in response and rubbed the back of his head.

' ' Shinpatsu... Really... That was scary moment.' ' said Heisuke. Hijikata swallowed. No doubt that his shoulder was bleeding but he didn't showed any pain on his face.' '

"Scary? Don't say you doubted these beautiful guns, Heisuke." Shinpachi flexed a bicep, looking as though he may have kissed those guns if they weren't covered in blood and black streaks from soot.

' ' I think your brains are in those.' ' said Heisuke.

"Some big brains I have then."

' ' Only the wrong place.' ' said Heisuke. Hijikata was staring at the see. Osen and Chizuru were helping the others.

"Hm... checking out the babes Hijikata?" Shinpachi asked.

' ' Hmmm.' ' he said absentminded and turned around, showing a bloodspot on his shoulder.

"Hey, nurse get over her for a minute, we've got a bleeder!" Shinpachi called, then patted Hijikata's uninjured shoulder and winked. "Thank me later."

Chizuru came with the first aid kit and fixed his shoulder. ' ' Do you have pain?' ' she asked.

' ' A bit.' ' he said.

' ' Ask her to kiss the pain away.' ' smirked Heisuke.

Shinpachi snorted with laughter and raised a hand to high five Heisuke.

Heisuke gave a high five and laughed as well. Hijikata glared at them as the boat suddenly moved and Chizuru fell on him. Heisuke rolled now over the floor laughing, the face of Hijikata was one of thousand.

"Oi, oi! Sano he's not even drunk this time!"

' ' Hijikata... what is that?' ' laughed Sanosuke. Chizuru sat up quickly and blushed alot.

' ' Everyone, stop laughing! It's not funny.' ' said Hijikata, even he was blushing a bit.

"Look at that! The demon is blushing!" Shinpachi doubled over laughing even more.

While in his own little corner away from everyone else Saito didn't exactly seem happy to see that sort of thing going on, he glanced away from the situation and took a drink of sake while mending his



wound. Maybe... he thought... the Vice Commander really did like that kind of person.

Hijikata stood up. '' Hijikata-san, I was not done.'' said Chizuru.

'' I can fix it on my own. '' he said and sat next to Saito and took a drink from Saito's cup as well to calm down and Saito had no complains about the Vice Commander drinking from his cup.

"Vice Commander you should get your wounds mended." Saito said, avoiding looking at Hijikata while he took finished wrapping his own injury.

Hijikata was cleaning it by his own. '' I am just pissed... I can't have my head at woman right now.''

Saito dropped the bandage roll with a sharp inhale and grabbed his stomach, doubling over. Normally he never showed pain, but that sharp sting had shocked and startle him by coming out of nowhere.

'' Hajime..'' said Hijikata softly and put his hand on his. '' Are you okay?''

"I'm fine... I think it's seasickness." At least that was what he told himself. It had to be sea sickness, that was all. It would be over once they got off this boat.

'' , I almost spilled my blood on you.''

"I have it all over me as it is. It wouldn't matter."

Hijikata smiled faintly as he put his clean bandage on.

"I'm going to go check on Souji..." He made the excuse to move, no point in anyone seeing something was bothering him.

'' Shinpatsu, Sano... I got some playing cards with me.'' said Heisuke.

"Really...? You think we can get the girls to play strip poker?"

Kondo passed by and walked to Hijikata, getting in a serious conversation, it seemed to be a very heated debate. The two seemed to even be arguing a bit here and there.

Shinpachi glanced over at them, wondering what was going on. "Hm... wonder if anything is wrong." Shinpachi pondered, sitting down.

'' You really want to take them in?'' said Hijikata.

'' We need to. Alot men are still injured and they can tend the wounds.'' said Kondo.

'' I can understand that but I need to make a rule then if they touched them there will be a punishment.'' said Hijikata.

'' Why would you do that?'' asked Kondo.

' ' Kondo-san! Look at them. They were already having fun when she fell on me accidentally!''

' ' You're right. ''

Saito headed down into the ship to check on Souji, but found he was in terrible health, not feeling well and not even awake. Souji's sheets and blankets were practically drenched in sweat and Saito glanced around in the hallway to see if he could find someone who knew where the fresh sheets were.

' ' Chizuru! Do you still have the medicine with you?'' asked Osen.

' ' Of course but you know how I think about it. '' she said.

He could hear injured men crying down the halls and decided he could take care of Souji on his own, he didn't want to disturb the nurses that were already so busy. His slow footsteps echoed across the room as he grabbed the wet cloth from the bucket and sat near Souji, putting it over his forehead and wiping the sweat.

"Just hold on Souji."

Chizuru passed by with bloodied clothes and put them in a bucket with hot water to clean. ' ' How is Okita-san? He got tubercu-... ooh!'' she said suddenly, dropping one of the sheets.

Saito glanced at her, but said nothing as he left the cloth in place and slowly got up, picking up the dropped sheet and setting it with the others in the bucket. This was the person that had caught his Vice Commanders interest. Why? She was just some woman.

She start to wash it. ' ' I can help him. I am the daughter of a doctor and I studied as well. ' '

He glanced at her, a very skeptical sort of a look, but not at what she said, merely because he just couldn't understand why the Vice Commander was interested in this person. It was irritating him... they would be in close quarters as she was one of the nurses that tended to Hijikata's wound.

' ' The disease that Okita-san has is eating his lungs, that's why he is coughing up blood. ''

Still for a moment of scrutiny he was silent until finally speaking up. "I know what he has."

She glance at him before walking further back to her sister. He went back to Souji to take care of him, perhaps he'd been a bit rude, out of line, but he couldn't help it.

Kondo came back later with a shadow on his face. ' ' Saito, thank you caring for Souji. He is... a son to me. ''

"Commander." Saito stood respectfully.

' ' Saito.. well done. You may go now. I only warn you, Toshi as a bad mood. ''

"Why would that be?"

' ' The girls are going to live with us. He was fine with that but he wanted to add a rule that the guys can't have loose hands and touch them. I agreed with him.' '

"..." Saito said nothing at that. So that woman would be living with them once they arrived at their island base.

' ' Osen, Chizuru and Sozuku... Atleast we got woman now that will cook for us.' ' joked Kondo a bit.

Saito merely stepped out of the room without another comment. He didn't agree nor like it, but neither could he complain about a superior officers choices.

Shinpachi glanced over the side of the boat. "Alright! There's the dock!"

' ' Good. I want to sleep.' ' said Hijikata.

Shinpachi started stripping down to the underwear and jumped over the side of the boat, swimming to the island, as it wasn't far at all. "Come on in Heisuke, the water is freezing!" He laughed. Heisuke followed his example and was swimming next to him.

"I'll reach the beach first." Shinpachi taunted. Sanosuke was grinning when he saw them being like that.

The ship docked finally and the Aizu men started gathering their gear, starting towards the fort and to prepare the beaches for defense as they knew the enemy forces would soon be coming for them.

The Shinsengumi and the woman from the Inn headed up to the fort, preparing it for their long stay. Sanosuke and Heisuke were challenging each other who could take the most luggage.

As he stepped off the ship, Saito glanced back at the mainland. It was with some great regret to give up the mainland for this place, but that was the Aizu's decision.

Suddenly in the midst of his thoughts he was stopped by a hand at his sleeve, the injured man was being carried by on a stretcher, the one whom he had gone back for and the man offered him a gift, a small box of cigars from the west. He tried to decline, but the man would not have and so he took them, if only to be polite, he would later find someone else that wanted them.

' ' Let's go. A lot of people need to rest.' ' said Kondo-san.

"We'll get a guard set up." Shinpachi said, and as he walked by Saito handed him the box of cigars. "Hm?" Shinpachi glanced at it. "Oh, something from the west, who gave you this? A lady admirer?"

Hijikata looked up when he heard Shinpachi saying that, he didn't like the sounds of that.

Except of course, Shinpachi didn't get a reply from Saito as usual and he just continued on with his duties of carrying gear and weapons

to their base.

"Oi, Sano want a cigar? Saito got some from a lady." Shinpachi teased purposely, it was funny for him to see Saito's silent annoyance.

' ' A cigar. Sure. I will keep it with me when I go to a red light district... can be interesting.' '

Shinpachi opened the box and handed him one. Sanosuke took it and put it in his pocket. Hijikata was walking towards the fort. He wanted to settle so quick as possible. And at his orders they were working on getting settled in, except, despite settling in Souji wasn't doing very well, in fact he seemed sicker and sicker. He was so weak now he couldn't even work up a cough anymore and his chest was aching beyond belief. His only disappointment was he couldn't go out like a warrior for Kondo to be proud of him.

Chizuru sat next to him and wiped his forehead. ' ' Okita-san... have something... that will make you better...' '

"Like... what...?" He asked wearily.

' ' It's a medicine that cures everything... Your wounds heal faster and you will be stronger as well. There is only one catch... you need to drink blood.' '

"That's a..." He swallowed with difficulty. "funny joke..."

' ' it's not...' ' said Chizuru. ' ' You can always try... right?' '

"I guess so..." Souji still tried to smile, he wanted to smile until his last breath. In the distance thunder rumbled violently as he tried to sit up, to give this medicine a chance.

She gave it too him and smiled honestly. ' ' You will feel so much better.' '

Souji wearily glanced at the redish liquid and slowly swallowed it down, lightning cracked across the sky outside, as if threateningly.

' ' With this, You will be the splendid warrior again next to Kondo's side.' '

"I hope... that can be true." Souji replied.

' ' It will be... you need sometimes a bit blood. that's all. I can see how much Kondo-san means to you and the Shinsengumi.' '

"Enough of the joke already..." Souji didn't really understand the point of joking at a time like this, he couldn't believe the side effect.

' ' You will.' ' she said. ' ' Within a hour you will feel much better.' '

Hijikata was commanding the captains and the squads as well to clean the damn fort up since no one had done that. ' ' We don't need sick people here as well.' ' said Hijikata.

Outside Saito was helping the men put up fortifications, despite the downpour of rain. There was no time to spare when it came to the defenses. From the distance, the Aizu soldiers looked nothing more than worker ants, doing their jobs hurriedly.

The sea crashed angrily against the shore and the working men all stopped to stare in awe at the beast of a sea they saw in the flashes of lightning. It looked as though it would come in and swallow them whole.

"Hurry and get these defenses up! There's no way they're mad enough to sail in this!"

Sanosuke and Heisuke went quickly to Saito to help him with the defenses. '' I hope after this weather we can enjoy some sake.'' said Sanosuke.

Still Saito could have sworn there was something in the distance, but it was possible his eyes were playing tricks on him. The rain and the lack of lighting, it was very possible it could be anything. Nobody in their right mind would sail in this weather.

By the time Saito looked up again the dark spot on the ocean had gone, perhaps someone had attempted it and sank, maybe his eyes were just playing tricks, either way it was gone now.

"Alright! Let's turn in for the night. This lighting is no good!" Called the Aizu commander. The soldiers slowly turned in, still, despite the rain they would have to set up a guard tonight and work in shifts.

'' I will do it.'' said Heisuke, seeming to know exactly what Saito was thinking before he said it. '' You need to stop before you overwork yourself.'' he said to Saito.

"It will be fine, I rested on the ship."

'' You should listen to Heisuke.'' said a voice and it was Hijikata. '' you were having trouble earlier on the ship.''

"It was just a bit of seasickness. It's fine now."

'' I need a drink..' ' said Hijikata suddenly and turned around. Sanosuke raised an eyebrow. '' He needs a drink? But that means...''

"Means?" Shinpachi asked, shaking rain from his hair like a dog.

'' He is stressed. Before Heisuke and I left, he had a fight with Sannan-san.''

"Really? Do you have any idea what about?"

'' Sannan-san was ignoring an order. Hijikata had told us to set up a defense and clean up the house since it was dusty. Hijikata don't want sick people. Instead, Sannan-san was in his room and study with ease one of his reports. Hijikata became angry and said to Sannan-san he needed to help but Sannan-san only laughed and said he was not a cleaning lady.''

"Tch, those two sound like an old married couple."

' ' But I think Hijikata-san is right.' ' said Sanosuke. ' ' Everyone is working and Sannan-san is sitting on his butt.' '

A group Aizu soldiers slowly walked in, carrying a large box. "We have clean uniforms and rifles for everyone."

An Aizu soldier tossed a package to Saito. "Here, have one lefty." Saito regardless accepted the package, at least it was something warm and dry to put on.

Saito made an effort to check on Souji, except he was shocked to find Souji sitting up on his own.

"Souji?"

"Look, look at this Hajime-kun. I feel better. My cough is even gone suddenly. All thanks to that medicine." Souji seemed excited and happy over the development, but Saito wasn't sure what to make of it, of course he was glad, but how was it possible?

"I see..."

"Hajime-kun, I can't wait to tell Kondo..." Souji said then and Saito faintly smiled.

"I'll inform Hijikata of this news."

' ' Hijikata-san?' ' was heard and Hijikata look behind him, seeing Chizuru.

>' ' You need some rest and dry clothes.' ' she said. She took him to his room where she could refreshed his wet bandages. He stared at her, working so neat and efficient with his wound.<p>

' ' I though you were clumsy, maybe I am wrong. You know a lot about medicine.' '

' ' you have knowledge about medicine as well.' ' said Chizuru.

' ' Not much like you do. I know the basics.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' What did you need earlier?' '

' ' Nothing. I heard you yelling and I came to see if everything was okay.' ' she said.

Hijikata sighs. ' ' Not really, it seems ignoring my orders is become all the new rage.' ' he sighs.

' ' They said you were a Demon but... you got a good side in you that you barely show.' ' said Chizuru.

' ' Really? You already found that?' ' he said and she giggled.

Saito had started out to inform Hijikata of this good news when he paused at the door upon hearing voices. Luckily they hadn't noticed him so he slowly backed up and leaned on the wall. Saito furrowed his brow there was no doubt it was wrong of him to listen in on their conversation, but... well he couldn't turn back now. They were talking a bit when it turned silent and a small wet sound was heard.

Several seconds later, Chizuru fled the room, hiding her face.

Saito also stepped away glad she'd gone the other way and not noticed, he quickly left down the hall, Kondo could just as well inform Hijikata.

Not much later, they were eating together, all of them. Osen, Kosuzu and Chizuru were filling the bowls and drinks. As Chizuru filled the bowl for Hijikata and look at him she flushed a bit.

"Hijikata!" Souji said through a big mouthful of food, eating for the first time in days. "Just what sort of a look was that?"

' ' What look?' ' he asked and stuff some rice in his mouth.

"That look, did you molest the poor girl?" Souji laughed, almost childishly, he was definitely happy to be well again. "Well I hope she liked it."

Chizuru dropped her spoon and flushed. Hijikata choked in his rice and took some sips from his tea. Osen walked to her sister and open her hand.

' ' Chizu-chan, it's time.' ' she said and put protection in her hand.

' ' ONEE-CHAN!' ' she shouted with a red face. Everyone was laughing, except Hijikata who had soft flushed cheeks and Chizuru who was terrible ashamed as well as Saito who shoved his food to Shinpachi and got up and left the room, leaving Shinpachi surprised with a mouthful.

Swallowing quickly he called out. "Ah, thanks Saito!" He then looked down. "No, way... I'm the ultimate... I got Saito's food without effort... the last guy that tried that..."

Hijikata stood up as well. The nonsenses already! He walked outside and saw Saito. ' ' Saito..' ' he called.

He didn't bother to look back, adjusting his new uniform with discomfort. "Vice Commander... is there something you require?"

' ' Yes. Come to my room please, this is private information.' '

He let out a sigh as his shoulders lowered somewhat. "As you order."

' ' My orders are being ignored for today.' ' he grumbled as he walked back to his room.

He followed him uneasily, so then it seemed that Hijikata was really going to be with this woman... that night he had kissed her... it had to mean he was interested.

Hijikata looked around before he closed the door and sat down. ' ' Have a seat.' ' he said and was getting a booklet. Saito sat down, formally as possible. Hijikata gave Saito the booklet, it was notes about Sannan-san.

"... this is..."

' ' I am shadowing Sannan-san for some time.' '

"This... does... it mean what I believe it to?"

' ' What do you believe?' ' asked Hijikata to sure what Saito was believing.

"But... what could he want with them?" Saito asked, not understanding why those damn sisters came into everything and caused trouble.

' ' I have no idea. He keeps taking notes, goes back to his room and is reading medical books. I know he is a scientist but why...stalking the sisters? Not too mention their niece. That girl is already very shy.' '

"What would you ask me to do?" He wanted to know if Hijikata wanted him to kill Sannan. He wasn't above dirty work, he had done plenty.

' ' When he moves around, keep an eye on him.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' If he touch one of the girls, warn him and report it to me.' '

"Very well." He replied, also wondering if this had to do with Hijikata liking that one girl.

' ' If Osen's fiancée hears that one of the men touched his girl... he will create chaos.' '

"I have no doubt." But he silently added, and if someone touched Chizuru it would be the same for you wouldn't it? "I will be going to attend my duties."

' ' Good. Saito, I can always thrust you with this kind of thing. You don't know how much this means to me.' ' he said and gave Saito a pat on his shoulder.

Except Saito pulled away from the touch and headed out without a word, slowly putting the distance between them in every sense of the word. Hijikata look after him with a confused look on his face. Did he do something wrong?

Things continued on that way for some time and it seemed that Hijikata and Chizuru only got closer as time went on. It no doubt had been noticed by everyone and Chizuru's sister Osen didn't quite help the matter with her interventions.

Outside in the gardens Saito leaned his chin on his hand in thought, when Souji walked up behind him and slapped a hand over his back before sitting down next to him.

"Hajime-kun, have you been sleeping? You look tired." Souji asked and Saito didn't have a chance to answer as Hijikata was walking through the garden as he saw Chizuru. When he saw no one else was in the garden, he walked to her. Chizuru saw him and put her arms around him and he did as well.

' ' Osen was picking on me.' ' she said and he smiled.

' ' Just let her be.' '



' ' I was just wondering, when are we able to...kiss. I mean... after that night... you are avoiding it.' ' said Hijikata and Chizuru flushed away her look.

Saito glanced up and scowled, it was a shocking sight for Souji, because in all the time he'd known him Saito had never made such a reaction to anything. Saito clenched a fist over his knee so hard that his knuckles had turned white.

"Hajime-kun..."

"That woman... she's poisoning the Vice Commander's mind..." Saito said.

"Hajime-kun... you sound jealous." Souji teased, trying to lighten up the situation. Surely Saito didn't have those kind of feelings for Hijikata. He was probably just upset about so many women running around distracting the men.

' ' GUYS! LUNCH IS READY!' ' called Sanosuke.

"Souji... I have something important to tell you... however... I need you to promise you won't tell anyone else this sort of thing..." Saito began and Souji's eyes widened in shock. Souji nervously rubbed the back of his neck and walked away after hearing such shocking news that Saito gave him. Souji quickly went into the lunch room, followed by Saito.

As Souji sat down, his gaze kept wandering from Hijikata to Saito. Souji was very tempted to say something, because he thought that it was something Hijikata needed to know. It was an important thing to know, but he couldn't say it, because Saito trusted him to not say it.

' ' Kondo-san, I need to ta-...' '-

' ' Sorry Toshi, not right now.' ' said Kondo.

' ' But I've wanted to speak with you for three days already.' ' said Hijikata.

' ' I am sorry but you need to fix it on your own.' ' said Kondo. Hijikata was done. He put his sticks down and walked away out the room.

Sanosuke look at Hijikata. ' ' What's with him?' '

Saito also left the room, seeing as there was no one to order him to eat when he didn't feel like it.

"What's with him?" Shinpachi added.

Several hours later, Chizuru was searching around for Hijikata but couldn't find him. Hijikata was leaning on the edge of a bridge, staring in the water. Hijikata was wondering... maybe he was losing respect because he was with Chizuru. And right now, the safety of Japan was more important than...a love life. He sighs... wondering what to do.

Saito was off on his patrol with Souji and he was quite aware of the looks he was getting from Souji.

"Almost time to head back." Souji mentioned and Saito nodded, except both stopped their horses when they heard something rustling. "Hm... an animal?"

Saito dismounted and drew his sword, moving towards the bush when suddenly something hopped out and both the men startled and jumped. White and fluffy a small bunny twitched it's little pink nose at them and Souji burst into laughter.

"Hajime-kun! It was a just a rabbit."

Saito sheathed his sword with a sigh, faintly smiling as he mounted up on his horse again. "Let's tell no one of this..."

"Right, nobody needs to know we screamed like little girls over a bunny." Souji agreed.

Except the bunny made a scared sound and started running, resulting in both captains glancing at one another in surprise. From Souji's side something leapt at them and this time it wasn't a rabbit.

Souji quickly drew his sword, cutting it down from his mounted position, and yet another came out, and then another and another.

A gunshot echoed and Saito leaned forward suddenly, jerking his horse's reigns to the side, but the horse was startled by another creature leaping out and threw Saito.

"What is this? A new rage to dye their hair?" Souji questioned, dismounting and slapping his horse in the rear to send it off, hoping that someone would recognize it and send reinforcements. Souji sliced through another creature and he and Saito fended them off like true wolves of the Shinsengumi. That was until Saito grew weary and didn't even notice the one which appeared from the bushes behind him. "Hajime-kun!"

Too late, the creature wrapped it's arms around him and squeezed, hard. There was a sickening crunch of bones and Saito choked up blood, trying to escape the impossibly strong grip.

Souji let out a yell and pierced the beast through the side.

Hijikata saw suddenly Souji's horse and ran to the direction and saw their fight, he took his sword and cut down one of the beasts. "What is this?!"

"Stay with me Hajime-kun. Stay with me."

Souji glanced at Hijikata, for just a moment there was a glint of red in his eyes, he pulled Saito tightly into his chest, trying to keep his body from convulsing, that beast had completely crushed his ribs and Saito was choking on his own blood, bubbling out from between his lips.

"Hijikata..." Souji had to get away from Saito as his blood lust was pushing him, but he needed Saito to be safe first, he hoped Hijikata

could take him off his hands. "Those bastards... they're not even human... something is wrong with them... something is wrong with me..."

It was difficult for Souji to resist the temptation of blood all around him.

Hijikata took Saito. '' I will take care of him. Can you handle it on your own?'' he asked.

"Yea... I can handle them..." Souji assured.

'' Alright.'' said Hijikata and went quickly back.

Once they were some distance away Souji ran one of the beast through and licked the blood off his blade, for a moment not able to hold in the urge for the blood. "Who's next...?"

Saito felt his vision darkening, he couldn't breathe, the broken ribs from that crushing bear hug had stabbed into his lungs and he couldn't get the air in that he needed. Hijikata had noticed the struggle and gave leaned over, using mouth to mouth and breathing air into his lungs.

'' Come on, Saito... Don't leave me alone.'' said Hijikata.

Shinpachi stumbled into the room. "Hijikata what the hell happened?"

'' Souji and he were in a fight with... strange creatures. But Saito has trouble breathing. I don't want to lose him.''

"Heisuke! Get the nurses would ya'?! " Shinpachi hurried in to help, tugging Saito's uniform open, except really he couldn't believe the damage he saw. It looked like he had been shot, but as well the bruising and broken bones made no sense in his mind. Let alone how he was still alive. "What the hell... happened to him...?"

'' I have no idea...'' said HIjikata and gave him once again mouth to mouth. Osen and Chizuru came in running and did what they could.

"Oi, Saito you can hear me right?" Shinpachi questioned, putting his hands over the wound to at least stop the bleeding. "Can he hear us?"

'' I have no idea...'' said Hijikata and look worried to Saito. Chizuru was stitching the wound while Osen kept the wound clean. Chizuru worked fast as she could.

"... he's not breathing..." Shinpachi said in worry, just as Souji, covered in the blood of his enemies stumbled in.

"Hajime-kun... how is he...?"

Hijikata placed his forehead on Saito's . '' Hajime-kun... No...'' he sobbed softly. Sanosuke looked away, seeing the Vice-commander like that...

Chizuru stood up quickly and runs out the room to get something.

"Holy... shit!" Shinpachi stumbled back at the sight of him. "Souji is that really you? ... News flash... you got old real fast..."

Souji looked confused, rubbing at his hair which had changed in color, so whatever those things were... did they have to do with Chizuru?

' ' Hijikata-san...' said Heisuke. It was hard to see him like this over Saito.

Chizuru came back with a bottle with red liquid and look at Souji.

Souji caught her gaze and narrowed his eyes. "Those things out there that attacked us... you... did you have to do with them?"

' ' No...' she said.

' ' Our father...' said Osen. ' ' ... has failed. But Chizuru at the other hand perfected it.'

Chizuru went to Saito and lifted Hijikata up. ' ' I will give him this. Don't cry.' ' said Chizuru. Shinpachi slowly got up, taking a step back. Chizuru gave the drink to Saito. ' ' have patience.' ' said Chizuru. Hijikata was close again near Saito.

Everyone in the room waited tensely, as it seemed for a moment Saito was surely dead, except after a few long and agonizing moments his fingers twitched.

"Alright..." Shinpachi began. "Explain... what the hell... is going on?"

Hijikata had put Saito's head on his lap and held by his shoulder while everyone was listening to Osen. ' ' Me, Chizuru and Kosuzu are pureblood demons. We are elite and live in peace. We don't do any harm. Yet our father is consumed by power and money and created the water of life, making the drinker a bloodthirsty vampire. I, my sister and my niece couldn't look at this disgusting creation and fled.

Chizuru, who followed her father in his footsteps as doctor was investigating the water of life and created an other version, the perfect one. The drinker will change but remain calm. The only urge will be sometimes that they want to drink blood. But it saves lives.. like Okita-san.'

"Then the ones who attacked Sano and I at the Inn?" Souji questioned.

' ' Kazama is my fiancée, also a pureblood. He is trying to find our father to stop him. Only he can be very very childish sometimes.' ' sighs Osen.

"Suddenly a lot more things make sense. So these things... they're made by your father..." Shinpachi echoed. "How do we stop half

demons?"

' ' Cut their head off.' ' said Osen simply. Chizuru was looking at the wounds of Saito that started to heal on their own.

"Sounds simple enough." Shinpachi then pointed to Souji and whispered. "Is his hair gonna stay that way?"

' ' Okita-san, can you return back or do you still need some blood?' ' asked CHizuru.

"I'm not sure how." Souji answered a bit sheepishly.

' ' relax your muscles and breath deep in and out.' ' said Osen.

Souji did as instructed and it seemed to be working. He was much more relaxed and returning to normal.

' ' very good.' ' said Osen with a smile.

' ' Why is he not waking up yet?' ' asked Hijikata.

"It took me a bit to feel better." Souji said, knowing it would probably take Saito longer with more damage.

' ' I see.' ' said Hijikata.

' ' Saito...means alot to you, isn't?' ' asked Heisuke.

Souji was wondering if he should still keep what Saito told him about his feelings a secrete still or not.

' ' Yes, he does. Don't get me wrong, All of you guys are important to me... but Saito... especially.' '

"Comeon everyone, let's let Saito rest, until he can recover." Shinpachi urged.

Everyone left the room... except Hijikata. Shinpachi glanced back at them before closing the door. Thunder rumbled and Shinpachi wondered what another storm was going to do. If those things could survive a lot... maybe they were sending them in in this weather and that was why they'd been caught unaware.

Hijikata was still holding Saito and sighs. He felt responsible what had happened with Saito. Sometime into the night Saito started waking, though at first he seemed extremely stressed and not sure where he was or what was going on. It was automatic that he searched at his side for his blade.

' ' Easy Saito...easy... You are in your own room.' ' said a soft voice, the voice of Hijikata.

"Where? How?" He sat up and touched around his middle, he'd thought he'd been hurt pretty bad, had his own horse kicked him by mistake?

' ' I found you and Souji. You were wounded and I brought you back here and Chizuru and the other women fixed you up."

"Ah... that woman again... again." He mumbled under his breath, She always factored in didn't she? He was thirsty though, dying of it it seemed. He hoped they'd left some water close by.

' ' Saito... Souji... He is not sick anymore.' ' said Hijikata.

"I know..." Still he was confused, he started to get up, hoping it wouldn't hurt to bad, but to his surprise it didn't hurt at all. He was only thirsty.

' ' Chizuru gave him something that made him better. She gave the same to you. The only side effect is... that you want to drink blood sometimes... those things you fought were demons.' '

"What...?" If Hijikata was saying it surely he wasn't playing around, but Saito couldn't help but look confused.

' ' I couldn't let you die... Hajime-kun.' ' said Hijikata and his voice broke. Hijikata pulled Saito in his arms and hugged him. ' ' Thank the Buddha you are still alive.' ' he said. ' ' You are special to me... You... You are...more then.. just being Saito.' '

He brought a hand up, wanting to accept the hug and to even hug him back, but he restrained himself... as always.

Hijikata took a notice of that. ' ' It's alright, we are...alone.' '

Still that just wasn't something he could allow himself to do. "I should... return to my duties..."

' ' Hajime, stop running away from me... You were dying in my arms... I want you to hold me...' '

"Between Shinsengumi members... there's no room for personal feelings."

' ' You are avoiding... It hurts me. I... I broke up with Chizuru... Because it seems I lose my respect if I go with a woman.' '

"Vice Commander!" He had to push away from him and stand up on his own. "That person... that woman... Hijikata... Chizuru made you smile... so no matter what anyone says... no matter... how much some people might not like it... you... should be with the person that makes you happy." No matter how much it hurt him to say it, because it was a painful thing to watch those two be happy in their own world together... if you loved someone the best thing you could do for them was to let them go and he loved Hijikata so he was going to let him be happy with that woman.

' ' I... see.' ' said Hijikata and stood up like he was defeated and left the room.

Saito let out a breath, shoulders dropping wearily as he remained there in silent solitude.

Hijikata was annoyed, pissed and frustrated. He was pacing in the garden and Chizuru saw him when she walked by with water. ' ' Toshizo?' ' she called him. He look up and saw her closely when she walked to him. No doubt she had cried, he saw it. ' ' Chizuru.. I am

sorry.'' he said as he pulled her to him and kissed her deep.

Osen passed by and saw what happened. She hit Hijikata hard with her fan.

'' OUCH! What was that for?!'' he shouted.

'' You! First breaking it off and now trying to suck her brains out.'' said Osen.

Saito slowly slid down the wall and sighed deeply, letting his head drop back onto the wall. Caring about someone wasn't the hard part, it was letting go. Despite the pain he felt, he genuinely hoped that things worked out between the two. That they were happy together was all that mattered to him.

\* \* \*

><p>The battle continues next chapter...<p>

#### 4. Sadness and Sorrow

Disclaimer: We do not own Hakuoki.

Title: Sweet and Bitter

>Category: AnimeManga Â» Hakuoki

>Authors: Mrs. Hijikata and Yu<br>Language: English

>Rating: Rated: M<br>Genre: Hurt/Comfort/Romance

>Published:<p>

\*\*\_Red Rose Inc. Presents...\_\*\*

\*\*\_Sweet and Bitter

><em>\*\*

\*\*\_Starring Mrs. Hijikata as Hijikata Toshizo\_\*\*

><strong><em>And<em>\*\*

><strong><em>Yu starring as Saito Hajime<em>\*\*

\*\*\_Additional characters also played by Mrs. Hijikata and Yu

><em>\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>The Shinsengumi and Aizu forces had gotten a strong foothold within the island. They still fought back and forth, skirmishes here and there, but mostly naval battles. The two opposing forces were looked in a stalemate for for now the front had quieted down.<p>

However the half demons were causing trouble, those things made by Chizuru's father and created to be used by the New Government forces were wrecking havoc on everyone, including their own men. The half demons made by Chizuru's father were not perfected, and so they killed anything that moved. Thus bringing upon them all a hellish force to be reckoned with.

And slowly, but surely Hijikata and Chizuru became very close. As close as two people could be and everyone knew about it and gossiped about it. One day in the morning, while having breakfast... Sanosuke asked everyone to be quiet while eating.

"Quiet? What for Sano?" Shinpachi asked, stuffing his mouth with more rice, ah, this rice was really the best.

' ' Shhh.' ' he said. Then they heard it. It was a repeat of softly moan of Chizuru with a strong groan after it of Hijikata. Heisuke choked in his rice, hearing it. Not too mention, Hijikata was picking up speed. Saito paused in eating and looked down, but otherwise remained silent and continued in his eating, trying his best to ignore it and Souji glanced over at him for a brief moment.

Suddenly they heard Chizuru yelling and Hijikata was shouting. ' ' SANNAN-SAN! GET THE HELL OUT OF MY ROOM! ' '

' ' My oh my, Hijikata-kun, I though you were in pain so I came in to check.' ' said Sannan-san with sarcasm.

' ' He is evil, Sannan-san. Terrible evil.' ' said Heisuke.

Shinpachi choked in laughter and yelled, giving them away for hearing them

"Ignore him and keep going Hijikata!"

Sannan-san walked in with an evil grin on his face and Heisuke and Sanosuke were laughing. Not much later, clean and well, Hijikata came in and started on his breakfast. Chizuru was still cleaning herself.

"Ahhh, Sannan... what a look you've got. Bet you got an eyeful." Shinpachi grinned.

' ' Say on thing...' ' warned Hijikata with a glare and Sannan-san only laughed.

' ' Why I should tell that Chizuru had such...pleasurable face and your look like a demons. I had expect much better from you.' ' smirked Sannan. Souj set a hand on Saito's back, wanting to comfort his friend, but before he spoke and drew attention he dropped his hand to his side.

"Oi, let's not talk about it." It was rare, but Souji was the reasonable voice, trying to protect Saito's feelings.

' ' Thank you, Souji.' ' said Hijikata relieved. Osen and Kosuzu looked at Chizuru when she came in. Chizuru sat down and started to eat, looking down, she felt ashamed.

Kondo came by. ' ' Toshi, can you give this to old man Ryozaiki? I should visit him but I am invited by someone else, also important.' ' - ' ' Sure, Kondo-san.' ' said Hijikata.

"So... you gonna marry her Hijikata?" Shinpachi asked suddenly.



Hijikata look at Shinpachi. '' Yes, one day we will but not now.'' he said.

"Why is that?"

'' There are still a lot of things that need to be done.'' said Hijikata as he stood up. ''First I need to deliver this. Then I need to write 14 reports and I need to train my squad.''

"... so you're saying... after you do all that?! Alright!"

'' No... You just want to hear me and her ...'' said Hijikata mad and left.

"... what did I say wrong?" Shinpachi wondered. "Ahh... sheez. Chizuru-chan am I going to be an uncle or what?"

All the while Saito was sitting silently, merely pushing food around in his bowl rather than eating it. He didn't have much of an appetite anymore.

'' I am just wondering... Does Hijikata also like men?'' asked Chizuru suddenly.

Shinpachi was just taking a drink before spitting it out suddenly. "What?! Where the hell does that come from? He's sexing you up isn't he? You two need to hurry and give us little samurai running around."

"You're just worried you'll lose the bet." Souji said, because the guys had bet on when the two would have children.

'' Well... he calls sometimes for Hajime in his sleep and then he pulls me very close to him.'' sad Chizuru.

Shinpachi got real quiet. "No, there's no way Hijikata likes men. Everyone here knows the rules. He's the one that made them. It's probably just nightmares about that incident."

Saito's reaction was... more silence. He just continued pushing food around, before finally finishing eating and getting up to go and patrol. Chizuru nodded and was finishing her rice bowl.

"But really... get working on those babies..." Shinpachi muttered, he had a lot of money on that bet.

Kondo-san saw Saito and greeted him. '' Well done, Saito-kun with your work.''

Saito paused. "I haven't done much."

'' You did a lot. You were the one that helped by catching that spy.'' said Kondo. '' Anyway... I am going to my next appointment.''

Saito nodded before heading out on his patrol. It was trying, because he hadn't slept in some time, but he would get his job done no matter what it took. At least he took solace in the fact that Hijikata was indeed happy and probably starting a family.

Suddenly a woman screamed about a bloodied man. Saito set his hand on his blade and hurried to the scream, damnit, leave it to Souji to pick now to eat late. Hijikata's clothes were torn up and was bitten, scratched, bruised everywhere. Blood was dripping from his mouth and his leg lay in a weird way, broken, the same for his shoulder and arm. His sword, that he had for years, was broken and lay near him.

"Vice Commander!" He drew his blade and came to stand near him. "What has happened?"

' ' Half... demons... ' '

"I'll help you get back just... just..." He gritted his teeth, the scent of blood was more than tempting, but he shook his head and gave Hijikata his support so that he could get back for treatment.

' ' Tell... chi-... ' ' but he passed out, leaving Saito having to support all of his weight on his own.

"Vice Commander!" Saito shouted in worry. Tell her? Tell her what? That he loved her? Surely that was it. "There's no need, you'll be able to tell her yourself." When they arrived at the headquarters, Heisuke was shocked to see Hijikata.

' ' HIJIKATA! ' ' he yelled.

"Quickly help us and find the women to administer aid." Saito demanded.

' ' SHINPATSU! HELP SAITO! ' ' called Heisuke as he run off to find the sisters and their niece. Shinpachi cursed under his breath. "Damnit! These demons are really getting out of hand!"

Sanosuke quickly went to the source to get water. Kosuzu put quickly a futon on the ground and Osen had the aid kit with her. Saito frowned deeply, how did this situation come about? Things were going to have to change around here and fast. This just couldn't go on with these attacks.

' ' Where is Chizuru? ' ' asked Heisuke.

' ' Right now, she is creating the Water of Life. ' ' said Osen.

' ' She will be back in several hours. ' ' said Kosuzu.

"That's too long." Saito said.

' ' I don't know if it works but... I got a bottle with at least some drops in it.. ' ' said Osen.

"We need to try."

Osen was getting the bottle. The content was not much more then a teaspoon. She came back and gave it too Hijikata. ' ' We will see how it works out. We clean his wounds and all what we can do is hoping he will make it until Chizuru is back. ' ' said Osen.

' ' I hate to say it but it is a good thing it Hijikata they attacked and not Kondo-san. Kondo-san wouldn't have been able to handle it as

well.'' said Sanosuke, staring at Hijikata who had trouble breathing.

Saito glanced down, taking notice of Hijikata's blood still on his hands and he internally winced, teeth clicking together in a hard grit. It was an extremely tempting offer, it wouldn't hurt anyone right? Just licking a little blood off his hand... he slowly raised his hand with such an intent, but abruptly stopped and turned to quickly leave the room.

No. This sort of thing was too dangerous. He just needed to get the blood off of him before he did something rash. He wanted to stay near Hijikata's side, but he was afraid that he may be the one to do more damage if he did, since he had this ungodly hunger trying to overtake him. Chizuru was outside and noticed Saito's behavior. She walked to him. '' You can take it... Don't worry. If gets worse, I will offer myself.''she said.

'' I need to wait until the potions is boiling for a few hours. It hurts me to see him like this but I need to focus on the potion.''

"I don't know what you're talking about." He just wasn't ready to give up his humanity to this sort of thing, there was no way he would give in and do such a thing. Not to anyone. She nodded in understanding, handing him a cloth before getting some herbs from the garden and going back to the room to finish the medicine.

"One moment... Chizuru..." He began uneasily, he wasn't used to talking to this person, he tried to avoid her in all honesty. "At the Vice Commander's request, although soon he will be able to tell you it himself, wished for me to tell you that he loves you."

She turned around and walked to him. '' Thank you Saito-kun.'' she said with a faint smile. '' I can see why he always keeps talking about you when he is with me.''

He furrowed his brow, surprised that Hijikata even thought of him. He had thought that surely Hijikata would have forgotten about him now that he had Chizuru.

'' I am kind of jealous in way.'' she smiled faintly.

"Why...?" This was probably the most time he had spent speaking to this person in all the time that she had been along with them.

'' Because I can't compare myself with you. I am his lover, you are his buddy or so he says. Meaning, we can't compete, we can't fight over his heart. Because we are equal to him. That makes me jealous.''

"I... feel the same."

She look at him. '' Is that why you tried to keep an distance between him and you? He though he did something wrong.'' she said softly.

"It's better this way."

'' You will hurt him. I don't mind it if you want to hang out with

him. I love him and I give him the space he needs. He said he wanted to take Kondo, you and Souji out to fish.'

"It is against regulations, so I'm afraid I can't. Please excuse me now, I've delivered my message."

' Then be honest to him. Tell him why so he can understand.'

He glanced over his shoulder. "I did explain the reason. You should be happy about that with the rumors that go around."

She walked to him. ' Everyone talks only about us by now... thanks to Sannan. You don't need to worry about that.' she said. ' Stay with him for now. I trust you you will keep an eye on him. I need to check the potion.'

"I owe it to him, to serve with my life, so I have no intention of abandoning him."

She walked to him and pecked his cheek and walked away to her room to check on the medicine. He rubbed at the spot, before returning to the room to check on Hijikata, hopefully he was holding on for the time being with what little of the medicine was left. Hijikata was still looking for breath and at one moment he opened his eyes, seeing Saito. His hand moved but not enough power to touch Saito.

"Just wait a little longer Vice Commander. Soon that medicine will be ready to help you."

Hijikata found his hand and hold it. He closed his eyes then and took a deep sigh which makes him cough. Suddenly he realized, that it was a bad choice to return so soon, he had washed the blood from his hands, but Hijikata was still covered in it and whatever was inside of him was clawing at his insides trying to get out for a taste of that blood.

Sanosuke came in with a bowl with water and started to clean up Hijikata. 'Saito, keep an eye on him. I will clean him up in the meanwhile.'

"That is... easy for you to say..."

' I know it is hard. Souji told me about the side effect.' said Sanosuke.

' So.. it sounds cruel but see it as training.'

"I won't give in so easily." Saito replied, in fact he never planned to give into it. Sanosuke had cleaned Hijikata's face and torso and the bite wounds were seen clearly.

"We need to effectively clear out these creatures soon."

' Yea. What if they attack children?'

"That would not be a good thing."

' Indeed.'

Saito gritted his teeth together with an audible click as he averted

his eyes, it was growing more and more difficult to sit here with the scent of blood so close by. What a ripe opportunity, thought the inner beast. Sanosuke was done and stood up to throw the bloodied water away. Saito was extremely grateful for that small mercy, but still it was there, waiting for an opportunity. It was always waiting. Suddenly the raising chest of Hijikata stopped and Saito seeing no other choice, and no more time for waiting, drew his blade and sliced open his own wrist. He gathered a mouthful of his own blood and grabbed Hijikata's jaw and placed his mouth over Hijikata's and hoped that, with the little bit of medicine and combined blood it would be enough to do the job.

After long moments his chest started to move again and moved his hand against Saito's cheek. Saito glanced at his wounds, hoping it was working, was that little amount of medicine enough if combined with the blood of someone infected already? Hijikata swallowed it and relaxed a bit.

Saito wiped his mouth with a sleeve, needing to get out of here now. That had really done him in... sparing blood when he was already craving it. He quickly left the room, for the fear of causing more harm than good if things went on the way they were.

Later into the night when he thought he was alone long enough to control himself, Chizuru came in Saito's room and tapped his shoulder. '' Saito... take this. It's my blood.''

"I don't want it."

'' You did a noble deed. If I let you suffer... I will be a horrible doctor.''

"It was my own choice, as is this. I thank you for your kindness, but please take this and give it to the Vice Commander instead. He requires it more." He took a breath. "I want to remain myself for as long as possible."

She nodded '' The medicine will be done in a few minutes and then I will give it to Hijikata.''

"It will be best to have him on his feet, the soldiers are losing hope."

She nodded then stood up and left his room.

"Kondo!" Shinpachi came riding on his steed to the front gates in a hurry. "I have news from the front!"

'' What about it?'' asked Kondo who was planning to join as well when Hijikata got the medicine down and was able to stand on his feet and fight again.

"The enemy forces have pulled back! It sounds like good news, but the reason isn't. It's those half demons. They're killing everything that moves. Even their own guys!"

'' I see. Well, Chizuru is giving Toshi the medicine right now. After he wakes up, we will have some ideas.''

"It's worse... I sure as hell hope Chizuru really has fixed that

medicine... because those things are turning into something really akin to demons."

Shinpachi sighed. "Kondo I don't know what to do. We can't fight those things so easily now."

' ' Her father's creatures... ' '

"Yea, well... they're tearing apart our men like rice paddies."

Souji stopped nearby upon hearing Shinpachi and set a hand at his sword. They couldn't handle them, but perhaps he could.

' ' Souji...Kondo-san! Hijikata is already awake! ' ' called Heisuke.

"He's awake? That's good, because the men are losing moral." Shinpachi informed.

Hijikata sat up and looked around and stood up, getting his haori and hakama.

' ' where are you going? ' ' asked Sanosuke.

' ' Killing some of those monsters. ' ' he said.

"Hold on a minute, Hijikata you just got fixed up, don't go out again and get torn up again right away, just let the men know you're alive. That's all they need to inspire them."

' ' I am alive and if I don't do a thing, the men are dead. ' '

"And if you get killed out there it's over."

' ' We need to think of a plan. ' ' said Kondo

"I agree, a plan is much more preferable than charging into something without thinking about it." Saito commented dully, giving his presance away as he stepped out near Souji. Hijikata's look became soft when he saw Saito. ' ' You are right. ' '

"I'll take Souji and Saito with me to spread the word that you're alright, for now recover so that you can be of some use." Shinpachi said.

' ' Be safe then... ' ' said Hijikata. ' ' Saito... I want to speak with you...alone. ' '

Saito glanced at him briefly, he had been hoping Hijikata didn't remember anything about that. "Very well."

"Guess it can wait." Shinpachi muttered.

Hijikata send everyone away and closed the door. He turned around to Saito. ' ' I know what you have done for me... I want to thank you. ' '

"There's no need. I did what had to be done."

He nodded. '' Be careful on your way with Souji and Shinpachi.''

"Of course."

'' Alright. I will talk with Kondo-san about a plan.''

"Please do so. We will return shortly." Saito hurried and mounted up with Souji and Shinpachi and they rode off in a hurry to spread the word. They spread the word to their troops of Hijikata's survival and all the men along their lines cheered, even men of Aizu who had grown to love Hijikata as a commander for his furious fighting.

Their job was done and moral had boosted and before long the soldiers spread word amongst themselves and entire island was aware of the Demon Vice Commander surviving what no man could possibly survive, furthering his reputation among men.

Later that night the three returned back to base, safe and sound, without incident.

'' Welcome back.''' said Sanosuke with a grin.

"Hahaha! Did you hear their cheers all the way from here Sano!?" Shinpachi slid from the saddle, practically bounding over like an excited puppy. "Right now I feel like we could take on the entire enemy army AND the half demons and win!"

'' Yea indeed. And he came up with a master plan to wipe out the demons. That is the demon Vice-Commander for you.''

Souji merely smiled like the sly fox he was and wandered off, Saito knew all too well that look was a troublesome one... and... that he didn't want to be on the receiving end of it.

'' Heisuke is now with Hijikata. They are sipping some beer in the yard.''

"Great! Let's join them."

Sanosuke nodded. '' Kondo-san, Sannan-san are there as well.''' said Sanosuke.

Saito opted out of joining them and retired to his own room, he may be a man that liked his drink, but tonight he felt like being alone.

'' Toshi survived it. I am glad.''' said Kondo

Shinpachi took a drink and nodded. "I never doubted that old demon."

'' Oi, I am not old.''' said Hijikata.

"You should prove it." Shinpachi said and Souji snorted, well he already knew where this was going. Shinpachi really wanted to win that bet he had made with some of the other guys.

"I agree. Hijikata you should retire and settle down." Souji stated, smiling





' I know... That's why we kept it quiet... But she'll start to show...'

"You may as well tell him. He'll find out eventually."

' I will tell him first before I announce it at dinner... damn what is this hard.'

Souji smiled sympathetically and shrugged.

' I will look for him.' said Hijikata.

"Good luck." Souji hoped that maybe Saito would tell Hijikata about his feelings, it would be best for everyone if he just admitted them.

Hijikata found Saito later and sat next to him. ' Hajime... I think we both need to talk and be honest to each other.'

Saito startled suddenly, he'd actually been asleep at first, but then woke at the sound of Hijikata's voice. "Vice Commander." He stood and formally bowed. "I apologize for falling asleep on duty. Punish me as you see fit."

' No, that's not needed, the only thing what I wanted to know.. what's going on with you? I promise I won't be mad.'

"Sleep is difficult to come by. Aside from that... there's nothing..."

' I know... you see me more than just as Vice-Commander. The glances, the looks you give me and the moments we shared together. But I am not asking you to commit seppuku for various reasons.'

Saito remained silent, so then it was severe enough to warrant seppuku just as he suspected. He hadn't been ordered, but if Hijikata gave the order he would do it without a moment's hesitation.

' Hey...' he said and gave a friendly push with his shoulder to his. ' You are a splendid samurai without a doubt, you are my best friend. I do have feelings for you but not in that way, Hajime-kun. I know I hurt you with those words but don't hate me for this.'

Except Saito more or less looked entirely confused, what did that mean? In that case did Hijikata also believe the rumors the men spread? So that was how it was.

Hijikata was scraping his courage together and sighs deep. ' First off all. You are who you are.'

"I think I'm done talking about it..." He said, then, without a doubt he was already upset by the turn this conversation had taken.

' Dammit...' said Hijikata and stood up. ' Chizuru... she is pregnant.' he said.

There was an audible intake of breath from Saito, but other than that he had nothing else to say. He couldn't find any words within

him.

' ' Regardless, what you think of me... Please, stay with me... with The Shinsengumi. I will give you space and rest... whatever you need...' said Hijikata and it was the first time his voice showed any fear...

"I'm not a child... I won't... run away." He replied. "I'm dedicated to my duties the same as everyone else."

' ' If you want to hit me... go ahead.' ' said Hijikata.

"Why would I resort to childish behavior?" Instead he turned around. "I'm returning to my duties now."

' ' Me... and... Chizuru have a request.' ' he said.

Saito stopped and glanced over his shoulder. "Ask it."

' ' We want you to be the godfather.' '

"If that's what you want. I'll fulfill it to the best of my abilities."

Saito would remain loyal no matter what happened.

Hijikata sighed a breath of relief. ' ' Thank you so much."

"Excuse me now. I have to finish my reports."

' ' Sure. Please be at dinner.' ' asked Hijikata.

"I need to keep up my strength. Did you think I wouldn't?" He was upset, but more so that Hijikata didn't have faith in him to continue how he normally went on despite all this.

' ' It's not that... It is just... everything changed so quick...' '

"You'll get used to it." He continue off on his own.

Time went by and dinner was going on. Everyone was present. Souji had been watching everyone closely, and especially Chizuru, trying to see if he could tell just by looking.

' ' Everyone... can I have your attention?' ' asked Hijikata.

Souji knew that Shinpachi was going to be happy the moment he heard this.

' ' Well..you see. It seems... I am going to be a father.' '

"YES!" Shinpachi cheered. "I won!"

' ' Congratz.' ' said Heisuke. ' ' I have still more news.' ' said Chizuru.

"More?" Shinpachi wondered what else they could say. What more was there to say?

' ' It seems I will have a twin.' ' she said.

Shinpachi burst into laughter. "Ah, way to go Hijikata you're a real man!"

' ' Twins? Holy crap...' ' said Heisuke.

Souji even looked surprised. "Now how does that happen? Here I thought his fish were gonna be so drunk on sake they'd swim the wrong way."

' ' I don't know. ' ' Kondo tried to get Hijikata back. ' ' A twin... Isn't that dangerous for a small woman like you?' ' asked Sanosuke.

"Dangerous?" Shinpachi actually looked worried.

' ' Well... Even in the demon world, it is indeed a heavy pregnancy to carry twins for a small fragile female.' ' said Osen worried.

' ' I am a doctor and I feel very fine.' ' said Chizuru.

"Just let us take care of you from now on. Don't do anymore work." Shinpachi said.

' ' he is right. No more work.' ' said Osen. ' ' But!' ' said Chizuru.

Saito finished his food up and headed out, leaving Souji to hurry and finish his food to go after him, since it was their turn to patrol. The others went to work as will. Kondo and Hijikata had an important meeting.

\* \* \*

><p>Sometime after returning from his patrol Saito calmly made his way down the hall before stopping at the door to Chizuru's room. He raised a hand to knock, but hesitated, glancing down at what he brought along. On second thought... maybe it was a better idea to stay away from them both and give them space...<p>

' ' Is someone there?' ' asked Chizuru.

He stood still then, well it was too late to turn back.

She stood up and found Saito. ' ' Saito-kun, Can I help you?

"I just..." He held up a hand with the gift he had brought. "to congratulate you both... I brought these. They're Linnaea... they like to call them twin flowers... I thought it would suit the situation."

Chizuru took the flowers and look at with a smile. ' ' They are beautiful. How thoughtful. Thank you.' ' she said and stood on her toes to give a kiss on his cheek.

"I just want to say, that I owe the Vice Commander a lot, so I will also serve and protect his family. If there's anything you need... just ask."

' ' That's very nice of you.' ' she said. ' ' Just keep an eye on him, He is working to hard.' '

"Of course. Are... the babies okay? I heard what Osen said about difficulties..."

' ' I feel fine right now. It will be harder when I will be six or seven months but I won't worry to much...' '

Regardless of the way he felt, he was worried about Hijikata's offspring, because he knew it would hurt him if anything happened to her or the children.

' ' I heard you accepted our request to be the godfather... I am happy.' '

"Yes. I will do my best to fulfill that duty for you both."

' ' I can't wait to hear what for name you come up with.' '

"I don't know that I would be good at that kind of thing. I can't even manage poems like most samurai."

' ' Then think about it with Hijikata.' '

He nodded. "Before I return to my duties do you need help with anything?"

' ' Well... I really like a cup of tea but if they see me near the kitchen, they chase me away.' ' she giggled. ' ' Probably scared I want to work or something.' '

"I'll retrieve it for you then."

' ' Thank you.' ' she said.

Sanosuke was peeling the potatoes and was whistling a tune when Saito entered the kitchen.

"Would you happen to have any tea prepared? Chizuru has requested some. I think it's best she not move for the sake of the babies."

' ' Tea? I can make some.' ' said Sanosuke and put the water on the fire. ' 'green tea with vanilla is good.' '

"So long as it's safe for the babies."

' ' Yea it is. Green tea is healthy and the vanilla is just for the taste.' ' said Sanosuke. He finished it and gave the teapot and cups to Saito.' ' Here you go.' '

He carefully took that and nabbed a small package of dango off the shelf before returning to the room to give her the things she requested.

She saw the dango as well. ' ' For me... wait, I need to say, for us?' ' she said with a smile.

"Ah... well... I need to return to my duties. I only brought what you requested." Plus a snack, in case she was hungry, as he didn't want

her attempting a dangerous mission for one. "I'll be going now."

' ' Alright. Have a safe trip.' ' she said.

"If you need anything else call someone."

' ' I will.' ' she said and lay down.

Saito returned to his own room to fill out a report on his earlier patrol. While Shinpachi was sitting outside in the garden, smoking a celebratory cigar over his victory in winning that bet.

\* \* \*

><p>It was warm... too warm and Chizuru sat under a tree with tea. She was eight months and a week now. Her belly was huge.<p>

' ' I see a seal.' ' grinned Osen. ' ' Ooh shush...' ' said Chizuru.

"Good morning ladies!" Shinpachi greeted. Even now he was happy, he had quite literally won a bet against the entire Shinsengumi army.

' ' Morning, Shinpachi.' ' said Osen. ' ' Can you keep an eye on my sister? I need to do the household stuff.' '

"Sure thing."

Chizuru sighs. ' ' Shinpachi, do you want to feel my stomach? You can feel them moving.' '

"Alright, let uncle Shinpachi have a look at these little guy's kicking power."

Chizuru placed his hands on her stomach and there was a kick and alot moving inside.

"Seems like the little guys are restless. Little samurai in the making no doubt."

' ' I know. I feel restless too. I am a bit worried that they will come earlier then expected.' '

"Oh?! You don't say." Shinpachi looked surprised, but non the less happy.

"Where's Hijikata today?"

' ' With Inoue and Kondo-san to a meeting with Aizu, talking about the half demons. Since the plan worked very well they want to look at the results...' '

"Well, I've heard talk at least that the war might end soon. Since it's been a stalemate for so long."

' ' Yes...' ' she said and then she was silent for a moment.

"It would be nice for us to be independent... we keep our ways and they get theirs." Shinpachi mused. "And Souji, Heisuke, Saito... I've

thought about it a lot, they're barely out of their teens, they joined young. It would be nice... if just for awhile they could live carefree. Even if just for a little bit. Your little fighters in there too of course!"

Chizuru grabbed Shinpachi by his arm. '' Shin...My...water broke...''

"Eh?!" Shinpachi looked to be in a state of shock for a moment before snapping out of it and picking her up in his arms. "Make way! I've got a lady having babies here! Osen-chan!"

Osen heard it and called for Kosuzu. '' Bring her to Hijikata's room since it is close.'' said Osen. '' And call the others.''

"Got it!" Shinpachi replied, carrying her in. Kosuzu was preparing everything and put a sheet over her legs and Osen was looking how far she was.

"Should I get Hijikata?"

'' Send a messenger out.''

"Alright. Right away." Shinpachi scrambled out in a hurry to get the message sent out. Chizuru yelled it out by her first contractions. She didn't expected it would hurt that much. No doubt that the whole head quarters would have heard it.

Souji was in the midst of an evil plan when he heard it and even this halted such a plan. Sanosuke and Heisuke looked up and runs towards the yell. The door was closed but they heard Chizuru groaning loudly from the pain.

"Sounds like they're on the way sooner than expected." Souji commented.

'' Yes.'' said Sanosuke. Chizuru gave a yell again. '' It's going to be alright. try to relax.'' said Osen.

"Ah, too bad Hajime-kun is on patrol." Souji mused.

'' Shinpachi has send a messenger..'' said Sanosuke. Hijikata, Kondo and Inoue were running back. Hijikata was running that hard... he never did that before.

"Hm, but will they all get here in time?"

Inoue went to Saito. While Hijikata and Kondo arrived Inoue went looking around until he saw him.

"Inoue, you look troubled... is something wrong?"

'' Chizuru went into labor. Three weeks earlier.'' he panted.

Saito furrowed his brow in worry. "Let's return then."

Inoue nodded. The guys were waiting outside. Hijikata was a nerving wreck.

Shinpachi glanced over his shoulder as they arrived shortly after.

"You didn't miss anything yet... well... you missed a little."

' ' Chizuru, you can push now.' ' said Osen. Hijikata look up, hearing that.

Saito's face didn't seem concerned, he had fate that everything would be fine. After an hour the first baby was born. Cries were filling the room. But they needed to wait for the second baby. Hijikata sighs when hearing the baby.

"Well comeon, Osen-chan don't keep us waiting what's what in there?!" Shinpachi asked.

The door went op and Kosuzu held a small bundle and gave it to Hijikata. ' 'Congratz, daddy. Meet your son.' ' Hijikata held him and look at the baby. ' 'Look.. what a tiny hands...' ' Kosuzu went back inside.

"Ah! There's my nephew! What are you gonna call him Hijikata?" Shinpachi asked.

' ' Want to hold him?' ' asked Hijikata very happy. ' ' His name is Mamoru.' ' Shinpachi held out his hands, fingers wiggling eagerly and Hijikata handed him off carefully.

"Ahhhh, look at that face, it's a little Hij-oh, wait there's some Chizuru-chan in that face too." Shinpachi smiled. "How about the other one? Boy or girl? "

' ' I don't know. Osen and Chizuru will pick out the name if it will be a girl. We didn't think of a second name...' ' said Hijikata. Suddenly another cry was heard, the other baby was born. Hijikata didn't know which way he needed to look. Then Kosuzu came out the room with another small bundle. ' ' Meet... Kiyomi.' ' she said and Hijikata picked up his little girl. ' ' A daughter... Guys, I got a daugther...' '

Shinpachi smiled and glanced at her. "Look at that... you're a lucky man Hjikata."

' ' H-how is Chizuru?' '

' ' She is doing fine. She is only very tired.' ' said Kosuzu.

' ' that's good ..to hear.' ' he said and looked to his children. Saito stayed off to the side, watching this situation. It seemed that his thoughts had indeed come true, Hijikata was happy, but his sole focus would be his family.

Osen came out. ' ' She is clean, you can visit her, Hijikata.' '

Hijikata went to Chizuru and kissed her forehead. ' ' Well done. What beautiful kids.' '

Except this happy moment wasn't able to last long, a loud thunderous boom echoed and the ground and entire fort shook. Shinpachi leaned over the baby protectively, knowing that familiar sound of cannon fire.

' ' Dammit! Get ready!' ' ordered Hijikata.

"Here, here." Shinpachi handed off the little guy he was holding as well.

' ' I need some men here to protect Chizuru.' ' said Hijikata.

Shinpachi glanced at Hijikata, he was torn between volunteering to stay with Chizuru and the babies to protect them and going out to fight and protect them, but eventually he thought up a better idea.

' ' I need to lead the groups.' ' said Hijikata.

"Stay here Hijikata we've got this." Shinpachi said. "You've got a family to think about. Just let us do our job."

' ' I am there as well. ' ' said Kondo. ' ' Let's go!'

Saito and Souji headed out quickly, making their way up to the top wall of the fort to try and get a good sight on what was going on. Sanosuke and Heisuke were setting up defenses.

"They're trying to invade with their ships again?" Saito frowned.

"Guess they'll never learn." Souji replied, lighting the fuse on a cannon and casually giving it a spin to aim towards the ships. The cannon ball was a direct hit on the ship and Souji looked satisfied. "I love these things."

' ' I am scared, Toshizo.' ' said Chizuru.

' ' I know... but we are doing our best. especially now since the The Shinsengumi has two new members.' ' The babies started to cry and it was a challenge for the fresh new parents to get them quiet.

"Let's get some more fire on them and blow them out of the water!" Shinpachi called up to them.

The ship let lose a volley on their fort, it took out some good chunks, including the wall where Saito and Souji were standing. They took a hell of a tumble, but were mostly unharmed for a minor scratch or two.

"Those bastards... that was my favorite big gun." Souji complained, drawing his sword to take out the charging enemy. Souji wasn't having much of a difficult time, but Saito on the other hand, the moment he drew his blade and spilled blood he felt the strong urge rising up to drink. It was distracting for him.

As for Souji he wasn't sheepish about licking off any blood on his hands. He did so without a second thought about it, because he had grown used to it. Maybe Souji didn't mind, but Saito did.

' ' Shinpachi... thirty two enemies down, what about you?' asked Sanosuke.

"Ah, damnit we're tied!" Shinpachi complained.



Sanosuke laughed at him. Kondo came to them. '' It seems the Aizu cleared the West already. ''

Out on the sea the ship was prepared to unleash another powerful volley, but suddenly another ship appeared, firing upon that one, with on very arrogant man standing on deck... and he had come for his woman.

'' Whoa... '' said Heisuke.

It seemed upon seeing their ship taken out, their only advantage the enemies lost their moral and either ran or surrendered.

"Hm, oh, it's that guy. I wonder what he's doing here." Shinpachi scratched his head.

'' His fiancée...Osen... '' said Sanosuke.

"Oh yeah."

'' I wonder what he think when he hears he became an uncle. '' said Sanosuke.

"Dunno." Shinpachi replied.

'' When the enemies were wiped clean from the beach. Kondo went to approach Kazama's ship.

"I've come for Osen." Kazama said, leaping off the ship and landing like a cat. "Where might I find her?"

'' She is at our place. '' said Kondo. '' She can't leave yet. '' said Heisuke.

"Of course not. I will be remaining here for the time being."

'' That's good. So you can meet your new family. '' smirked Sanosuke.

"Family?" Kazama questioned.

'' You became uncle. '' said Sanosuke.

"By whom? Take me there."

They took him back to the headquarters. Hijikata held Kiyomi while Chizuru was feeding Mamoru. Osen sat by Chizuru, helping her.

"Osen, I've come here for you-" Kazama stopped when he pushed the door open and saw the situation. "Sister in law... I am surprise you would settle for this... lowly half-breed."

Hijikata glared at him. '' Kazama-san, Toshizo is a demon at full heart. '' she said while she tabbed Mamoru. '' I love him and he loves me. ''

"If you so insist." Though, Kazama was still skeptical at most.

'' Osen, can you hold Kiyomi. I need to check the boys. '' said

Hijikata and placed Kiyomi in her arms and stood up.

Kazama silently observed. "Was the attack difficult? No... it doesn't matter now. My fleet is in the harbor, let them dare try and attack again so long as I am here."

' ' Thank you for coming.' ' said Osen and pecked his cheek. Kiyomi her eyes went open, bright purple like her father's.

"I've come only for you and my sister in law. But I suppose now I have no choice, but to accept two more into the family."

' ' Three...' ' said Chizuru.

"Hmp..." Kazama growled unhappily.

Mamoru was done and Chizuru took Kiyomi to feed. ' ' He is very good to me...' ' she said.

"He had better." Kazama said threateningly. "Better yet, he is going to marry you, correct?" If Kazama were to find out that half breed were just using his sister in law he would be very angry.

' ' Yes, we are engaged.' ' said Chizuru.

"Good."

\* \* \*

><p>The battle continues next chapter...<p>

## 5. The False Front is Finally Revealed!

Disclaimer: We do not own Hakuoki.

Title: Sweet and Bitter

>Category: AnimeManga Â» Hakuoki

>Authors: Mrs. Hijikata and Yu<br>Language: English

>Rating: Rated: M<br>Genre: Hurt/Comfort/Romance

>Published:<p>

\*\*\_Red Rose Inc. Presents...\_\*\*

\*\*\_Sweet and Bitter

><em>\*\*

\*\*\_Starring Mrs. Hijikata as Hijikata Toshizo\_\*\*

><strong><em>And<em>\*\*

><strong><em>Yu starring as Saito Hajime<em>\*\*

\*\*\_Additional characters also played by Mrs. Hijikata and Yu\_\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>17 Years later, Mamoru was a grown up samurai. He loved to hang out with his uncle Saito and uncle Souji. He had the image of his mother but the building from his father.<p>

Kiyomi was long and was almost the copy of her own father... Black hair, bright purple eyes. She was a trained Kunochi.

A group of soldiers hurried by abruptly, off to an emergency, not an enemy attack, but a fire had broken out in a civilian home. The Shinsengumi acted as the military, police and fire department lately.

' ' Busy...always busy. At least our little kunochi will knock over the thieves with her sexy looks.' ' smirked Heisuke.

"I beg your pardon?" Kazama stood behind Heisuke with a threatening look upon hearing such a comment.

' ' Eeh nothing.' ' said Heisuke.

' ' Uncle Kazama... Have you seen Uncle Saito? My father asked me to deliver him something.' ' she asked.

"He went with the men to help put out the fire." Kazama replied, eying her. "Really you should cover more."

' ' I can't move fast in long clothes.' ' she said.

Kazama merely sighed. "Very well."

Chizuru was getting water out the source as Hijikata hold her from behind and kissed her.

' ' Keep your saliva out of the water.' ' grinned Sannan-san, who passed by.

' ' Sannan-san, you sound like an old jealous woman.' ' stated Kiyomi dry. Sannan was the only man she didn't call uncle. Infact, she disliked him alot.

At the location of the fire a man was pleading and begging with the Shinsengumi members to go into the fire after his beloved child, whom was trapped inside and Saito narrowed his eyes as the men insisted they couldn't go in.

Finally Saito had enough and undid his jacket, tossing it off and handing his sword to one of his men. He headed forward and kicked the flaming door in, leaving his men, staring stunned as he did such a thing.

They waited in worry until finally they saw their captain coming out of the house with a bundle in his arms. A mewling bundle at that. He handed it off to the owner and the man sobbed while hugging the bundle and crying over the almost loss of his baby. Finally one of Saito's men stepped forward to confront the act.

"... sir... I can't believe you went back in for a cat..."

Kiyomi had taken the short cut, using the roof to get quickly at the destination. She jumped of the roof and men were already hooked up by the sight they saw.

' ' Uncle Saito, my father has a message for you.' '

Saito sighed and glanced up. "It's dangerous out here."

' ' I am an adult and kunochi, uncle Saito.' ' she said. It was scary how calm this girl was. Her brother was like Souji, seeing fun in everything while Kiyomi was a quiet girl.

"Come down here and give me the message then."

She jumped down and land elegant on the ground and walked to him. ' ' Father gives you the order to return quickly after this. It's about an old case.' '

"Very well." He grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her forward. "But it's still too dangerous for you out here." He wasn't about to let her be out here on her own, so he'd bring her back with him even if he had to force her.

She stared at him. His bright blue eyes were looking from an answer from her. ' ' Yes, uncle Saito.' ' she said softly.

He brought her back with him until they arrived at the fort and only then did he see fit to let her go. Out of everyone he supposed he was the most protective over them, because of his promise.

Mamoru, who was challenging Souji with a duel saw them.

' ' Uncle Hajime, What was she doing now again?' ' he said with a voice of being annoyed.

"Delivering me a message, continue with your sparring." He hurried in to see Hijikata, knowing if he sent her it had to be something very important.

Hijikata was writing a report in his room as he saw Saito and Kiyomi. ' ' Close the door.' ' he said.

Saito closed the door, folding his jacket over his arm and taking a seat. "You've requested my presence?"

' ' yes.' ' said Hijikata and Kiyomi stood in the corner. ' ' Do you remember that I requested once to keep an eye on Sannan-san?'

"Yes. However I believe he was aware and kept his activity to a minimum."

' ' True. Just a few months ago, I let Kiyomi to spy him again since everyone was busy. It seems he has picked up activities again.'

"I see. Would you like me... to take him out?" Saito asked, because he could make Sannan disappear if that were what Hijikata wished.

' ' Yes, I do. I have a plan, that's why Kiyomi is here as well. She will ask him to get a special errand and leads him into a forest. You will finish him there off.'

"Very well." Saito didn't ask questions. If Hijikata wanted Sannan dead there was surely a good reason behind it.

' ' Kiyomi will lead him away as distraction. But Sannan-san is smart

so if anything happens...' said Hijikata.

There was a part of him that wanted to protest against her going, Sannan was a dangerous man, but he would never argue against a direct order and mission.

Hijikata looked at his daughter. '' If Saito attacks, you will step aside, I am clear?' he asked and she nodded.

' Yes, father.' she said. '' Good. Do it after dinner.' said Hijikata.

Saito slowly stood up. "I will do so once he is alone."

'' Okay.' said Hijikata. Osen and Chizuru yelled that dinner was ready.

"I'll clean up before dinner, so I will be a little late." Saito informed, as he was still covered with black soot smudges here and there.

Kiyomi walked outside and Sannan-san passed by. '' Well, look at you. Your father... should be careful...' he said with his tone of teasing.

Saito didn't even blink when he stepped out, nor did he bother to look at Sannan, despite the fact that this person they had so long worked with, was the person he was about to kill.

'' Sannan-san, your comment is disrespectful.' she said and walked towards the dinner room.

Hijikata stepped out. '' Sannan-san, don't work too hard.' he said and also went for the dinner room while he was thinking.

With a tired sigh Saito stepped into the garden and sat down near the well, it was a private area, so at least he had time to himself. Here he removed his vest and shirt and brought up some water to get them clean. To him no matter what he always had to have his clothes properly clean and worn, because he believed one in his position had to look their best to present the Shinsengumi well and not look as a bunch of hobos on the street.

'' ooh It smells good! Uncle SAITO! THEY MADE TOFU!'' called Mamoru.

He paused and tapped his fingers against his knee, no, duty came first it would have to wait even if it was his favorite food.

Mamoru sat down next to his sister. '' Hello sis. How was your day?' he asked.

'' Boring.' she said. '' Are you still mad you can't train with Uncle Souji?''

Saito continued scrubbing at the dark soot spots on his white shirt with some frustration, really the damned things were stubborn.

'' Shinatsu! That is my fish!''

"Tch." Saito smiled faintly, it was the same every night with them. It did seem like it would get old, but he was so used to it that if anything ever changed he wondered how he would be able to live with it that way.

He gave a brief glance around and since everyone was eating and the area was private enough nobody would bother him he set his clothes aside and fully undressed so that he could make sure he rid himself of the smell of smoke that still lingered. And of course just as one may suspect the water was cold enough to give one goosebumps. He shivered for a brief second after pouring the bucket over himself.

Mamoru tried the same at Kiyomi's plate and his chopsticks went also for the fish. Kiyomi caught his wrist with her sticks and warned him. "Mamoru-niichan, try it again and I will have a twin-sister." she said with a cold voice.

"Oi, where's Saito off to? Food's getting cold." Shinpachi said, eying Saito's plate, if he wasn't here...

"Shinpachi, stay away from his plate. Kiyomi, get Saito." said Hijikata. Kiyomi nodded and stood up. Kiyomi walk to the bathing source. When she arrives she saw him bathing... naked. She saw his back and...butt.

Kiyomi... was... surprised that she didn't move. Of course, she saw sometimes uncles Heisuke, Sanosuke and Shinpachi half naked but not...totally naked.

Saito paused for a moment and furrowed his brow. "What is it you want?" He wasn't going to turn around, not because he was embarrassed, but rather because it would probably scar the poor girl for life.

"Euh... Father has sent me to warn you that Uncle Shinpachi want to eat your tofu." she said. And right after her sentence. "I am sorry, Uncle Saito."

"It's fine." Though, which thing was fine he wasn't exactly clear on.

She bowed and went back to dinner. She came in the room and her cheeks were slightly pink, barely noticing.

"Hm..." Souji's eyes narrowed suddenly when she sat back down. "Just what is that look on your face..."

"What look, uncle Souji." she asked as she start to eat her rice.

"Well, judging by the color in your cheeks you were up to something pervy." Souji threw in casually.

"Did you find Hajime-kun sometime during your pervy adventure?"

She stopped eating and look at Souji. Hijikata was also observing her. "I found uncle Saito and told him that uncle Shinpachi was eying his food." she answered.

' ' Huh? But uncle Saito was taking a bath.' ' said Mamoru.

"Ah, so that's how it is." Souji mused.

' ' I only saw his back...' ' she said, eating further.

' ' My, my, my... on such ages already looking to men.' ' said Sannan.  
' ' What would your father think?'

"What the hell is that supposed to mean Sannan?" Shinpachi asked, getting defensive, in these matters Shinpachi became papa bear.

Sannan look at Shinpachi. ' 'Well, look at her. She has the building of her mother, the beauty of her father. Not too mention, like Kazama tells her every time... put some clothes on. She is the dream of almost every man.' '

"Damnit watch your language." Shinpachi warned.

' ' Sannan-san, another word about my girl and I cut your tongue off.' ' said Hijikata. Sannan only nodded and eat further.

Mamoru smirked. His words were the law if his father spoke him. ' ' Where is uncle Kondo and uncle Kazama?' ' he asked.

' ' They are with the Aizu. Something about stuff that will arriving soon.' '

Saito finally came in, taking so long in having to go back for dry clothes, luckily Aizu supplied them with multiple uniforms just in the case of something happening to one, now was one of those times.

"I apologize for being late."

Kiyomi stood up and went to his cup and filled it with warm tea. ' ' I shall warm up your food, uncle Saito.' '

Souji leaned his chin on his hand curiously, he wondered if anyone else thought it was weird or if it were just him. Most likely just him, as he was always the one looking for trouble in everything.

"It is the price of being late. So please leave it as it is to remind myself not to do so again." Saito replied.

' ' Okay, uncle Saito.' ' she said and stood up.

' ' Kiyomi-chan, shall we get the desserts?' ' asked Osen.

' ' Yes, Aunt Osen.' ' And she followed her.

"She was offering to warm your food, be a little nicer, will ya?" Shinpachi scolded Saito for his coldness, but as cold as he was it'd seemed over the years he'd only become more so.

' ' That girls scares me also.' ' said Heisuke. ' ' She is barely surprised, she stand suddenly behind without a noise. She doesn't have that from her parents, being quiet like that.' '

"Heisuke! She's an angel! Take it back!" Shimpachi slammed his bowl down, crossing his arms.

' ' Who me?' ' asked Osen when she came back with Kiyomi and the desserts. They gave everyone pieces of watermelon. The last plate that Kiyomi was carrying was for Saito and she placed it in front of him.

"Uhhh, well you too Osen-chan."

' ' That is very nice, Shimpachi.' ' she said. Kiyomi piled up the plates so she could take them back later to the kitchen

Saito briefly glanced up to Hijikata and then for a mere moment Sannan. Hijikata did the same to Saito and ate further his dessert. Kiyomi sat down and ate her own melon.

Mamoru was thinking before he said: ' ' Dad... did you know that Saito is the fastest in pulling his sword.

' ' Who told you that?' ' asked Sanosuke.

' ' Uncle Sannan.' ' said Mamoru. Kiyomi didn't show anything but Sannan?

Saito made sure not to act usually, but rather continued finishing his meal. Did that possibly mean Sannan was on to their plan?

' ' Father, I excuse my self. I have a private matter to attend.' ' she said. She always said that if she went to the toilet. But she had something else in mind, shadowing... Sannan.

"I am also finished eating, so I will write my report on my earlier patrol and the fire which broke out." Saito stated and Souji choked on his food.

To Souji it was quite ironic, that she'd walked in on him and now suddenly the two were leaving at the same time. Could they make it anymore obvious?

' ' Sure. Good work Saito.' ' said Hijikata but he gave Saito a sign that he only knew, keep an eye on Sannan.

"Hijikata aren't you a little worried?" Souji asked once Saito had disappeared from the room.

' ' Worried? About what?' '

Souji sighed and leaned forward, dropping his head into his hands. These guys were oblivious.

' ' Souji... what are you scheming now?' ' asked Sanosuke with a raised brow.

"It's not what I'm scheming... this time."

Sanosuke was looking confused. Sannan stood up and left the room as well and... didn't went to his room but went out... Kiyomi jumped quietly on the other roof... shadowing him.



"... that just got creepy." Souji said suddenly.

' ' Creepy? You mean Sannan-san? He is always creepy.' ' said Heisuke

"... okay that's it I've had it with you people. So simple minded."

' ' Souji, ask Saito if he wants to join us for a drink.' ' said Sanosuke. ' ' I bought good sake.' '

"I'll do one better..." Souji get up and left as well.

Meanwhile... Kiyomi kept following Sannan. He was in the woods, talking with an old looking man. ' ' Kodo-san, I need to know what for your plans you have. The Shinsengumi is keeping an eye already on me...' '

Saito was also following her, preparing to get rid of Sannan as Hijikata asked and... Souji was after Saito thinking to get some perverted information on him. Except Souji had no idea what he was going to be walking into.

"Ah, all the way up here... what pervs."

Kodo look up and threw a knife that Kiyomi blocked and jumped put the tree.

' ' Well, well... Aren't you far from home.' ' smirked Kodo and then he look at Sannan. ' ' Kill her!.' ' ordered Kodo and he vanished.

Sannan look at Kiyomi. ' ' Dear girl, what would your father think?' ' he said.

' ' My father knows enough.' ' she said calm and held her wakizashi.

Saito stopped some distance away and put his back to the tree, no, he would stand back and see, just for now if she could really handle herself, if need be he'd step in.

Sannan pulled his katana. ' ' Let's see what the demon's daugther has...' ' he smirked evil and charged her. She blocked him and kicked him away. Sannan charged again and the sounds of swords meeting each other was heard. Then Sannan gave a swing and cut Kiyomi's face.

That was enough for him, he drew his blade and stepped out, since Sannan was focused on her Saito slowly approached him from behind.

' ' Look at you. Hijikata should knowing better...' ' said Sannan and licked the blood from the katana. His hair turned white and his laugh became high. Kiyomi wasn't afraid. She had fought before the wild demons...

"He did know better." Saito spoke before he put his blade through Sannan's back.

' ' You...' 'laughed Sannan. He wanted to pull his kodachi as Kiyomi

threw a kunai right through his head.

Saito removed his blade in a quick movement and flicked the blood from it, except he finally came to the realization of the strong scent of blood filling the air and gritted his teeth, internally at war with those long claw like talons clutching his heart with darkness and trying to draw him into their dark temptations.

Kiyomi picked up her Kunai and cleaned it. '' It is tempting... is it?'' she said.

He glanced at her, she was bleeding as well. It was a frustrating situation, but he couldn't give in to it no matter how badly he wanted to. He knelt next to Sannan and with hands shaking from holding back opened his coat up, searching around inside it for any documents. Kiyomi kept an eye on the surroundings until Saito was done.

He finally stopped as he'd found what he needed and his shoulders lowered with weariness as he pulled out a folded letter and held it out to her, turning his head away as he did so. "Here... take it... to your father..."

She shared Hijikata's blood and hers felt like more of a temptation than Sannan's, so it was better if he got her away from him while he got rid of Sannan's body.

She went with her hand to her cheek and wiped it off and offered her hand.

'' I have my mother's blood. It will calm you down while getting rid of Sannan's body.''

"Don't..." He leaned over and set his hands on the ground, breathing increasing, entire body shaking with the effort it took him to hold back.

'' No one is here and I know it is hard. It is just a bit...' ' she said calm. '' And I am offering it... so there is no harm.''

"You don't know what you're doing..." He growled, feeling more like a rabid dog than anything.

'' I see my mother's blood calm my father down. I asked why and she said because of the pure demon blood she has. It smarts when you get the urge so I want to help you.''

He grabbed her by the wrist then and stood up, the other hand grabbing the cloth near her shoulder and aggressively backing her into a tree. He had tried so hard and she just didn't listen... now... it was too late to run away.

She looked at him, she didn't feel anything that he wanted to hurt her and waited what he was going to do.

He leaned his face closer to hers and breathed in deeply, before his hand on her shoulder caught her chin and turned her face to one side. That beast inside prodded and he leaned in and licked the cut along her cheek, tasting blood for the first time since he became like this, having held off so long.

She closed her eyes and let him drinking her blood. Except the demon wanted more than that, there was a moment when he paused and pressed his full body against her before he leaned into her neck and bit her, hard, he was going to regret this later no doubt. It seemed the demon within truly had no mercy.

She whimpered, feeling his fangs cutting in her skin. But she didn't struggled and put her arms around him. She breathed out a long sighs when the pain subsided and became a nice feeling, how he was sucking on her skin and even feeling the flicks of his tongue.

He let out a low groan, God damn her, that sound, there was no doubt it excited him, he had felt it low. There. A drop of blood had thought it could escape, it was wrong, his tongue follow it down her chest until he couldn't reach any further.

' ... Sai...to...' she moaned softly. She hadn't expect that. her calm face turned slowly into something else... And her... stomach...started to start very weird... low in her abdomen... it was swirling...and getting warm...

He brought up a hand, reaching to pull the fabric to the side, if only so he could reach that drop of blood that wished to escape.

She breathed out again. His tongue was tasting her skin and she enjoyed it... She never felt like this in her whole life. It was something new and because they were alone...

Suddenly he paused and for a long moment didn't make any movement at all, it had won. That thing had beat him... and he had harmed one of Hijikata's children in the process of losing. It was a crushing realization.

She opened her eyes and look at him. ' Did you had enough?' she asked softly. He swallowed with difficulty and rubbed a thumb over her cheek, feeling terrible for what he'd done.

"I... didn't mean to do this..."

' But it calmed you down.' she said. She put her outfit straight. ' Don't worry. It will heal fast. We need to get rid of Sannan before somebody find his body.' she said.

Except Saito still didn't move and brought his face closer to hers, there was still that temptation there, but this one was a little different, still a left over of blood lust. He tilted his head to the side, almost, almost, but he abruptly pulled away, looking away quickly.

"I can't do this."

' But you did...' she stated calm. ' And...it felt alright with me.'

"I betrayed your father."

She look up. ' Betrayed?' she asked.

"I... touched you inappropriately... I've completely betray your

father."

' ' If it was inappropriate... I would have pushed you away. But I didn't...' ' she said and suddenly she showed flushed cheeks. ' ' It... felt really nice...' ' she said.

He sighed, knowing that was definitely a bad thing. It was entirely his fault. "He won't trust me anymore. What have I done?"

' ' Let's ...keep it a secret for now.' ' she said.

But no, he knew he wouldn't be able to keep something like that from Hijikata, right? "Just go home. Quickly. I'll take care of the mess."

She nodded and look at him. ' ' I will report my father that the mission was successful.' '

"Make sure no one sees you and make sure you get the paper to him."

She put the paper in her small bag on her waist and jumped in the trees.

In the distance behind a tree Souji whistled to himself. "Hajime-kun, Hajime-kun... just what have you gotten your nose into?"

Kiyomi stopped when she saw water and look into it, they cut was gone. She pulled her outfit a bit away... the bite was also almost vanished.

She put it back and runs further. Kiyomi arrived at the headquarters. She went to her father. ' 'Father, I have returned.. Hijikata stopped writing and looked at her.

' ' It went well?' ' he asked and she nodded.

As Saito got back he noticed some of the men giving him looks and he briefly checked himself once he was around the corner out of sight. He hadn't any blood or dirt on him, so what were they up to? He shook his head and quickly went off to his room, missing their conversation.

"So it's true? You saw the captain and the daughter of the demon commander sneak off together?" One soldier asked another.

"Saw it clear as day when guarding the gate."

Saito knew that he should return and report to Hijikata, but instead he found himself hiding in his room, not knowing how he could tell Hijikata what he had done. Not only was he a traitor, but he was also now a coward.

Hijikata was taking a walk with his daughter. ' ' Did Sannan hurt you?' ' he asked.

' ' No father. I fought and while the eyes of Sanna was focused on me, Saito charged at him.' '

' ' Good. So did you found anything special?' ' asked Hijikata.

' ' Yes, alot. Sannan was having contact with an old man named Kodo.' ' she said.

' ' What? KODO WAS THERE?!' ' shouted Hijikata.

' ' Did Saito see him?' ' asked Hijikata.

' ' I don't know.' ' she said. ' ' But Saito found this.' ' she said and gave him the papers.

' ' I will go to his room and wait for him.' ' said Hijikata. He went to his room and find Saito. ' ' Ooh you are already back? Leave it to you to finish it quickly.' ' he commented.

"Ah, yes." Damnit, that wasn't what he wanted to happen.

' ' Kiyomi told me that Kodo was present. Did you see him?' ' asked Hijikata.

"Yes. Except he disappeared."

' ' Dammit. Anyway, we know what Sannan was planning. Good job. It was probably hard for you with all the blood?' ' he asked. ' ' I know you are not feeding yourself...' ' he said a bit worried.

"I managed..."

' ' Alright. How was Kiyomi with her first execution mission?' ' "

"... she did well..."

' ' Very well. You both did good. I knew I was right to use you both for this secret mission. You are both are very quick and silent.' ' said Hijikata.

Saito merely glanced down.

Hijikata look at him. ' ' What is it? Be honest with me, Saito.' ' asked Hijikata gentle.

"Nothing. I was just thinking."

' ' I see. I see the report tomorrow.' ' he said and stood up. ' ' Sleep well, Hajime.' ' he said and walked away.

Saito let out a sigh, he knew he should have told Hijikata, but he hadn't been able to bring himself to do it.

Kiyomi was standing the bathhouse, washing the dirt and sweat off. She looked in the mirror. The wound of Saito's bite was completely gone but she touched the spot.

Saito shrugged his jacket off in frustration. Damnit, was it him or was it warm in here? He couldn't even think now. He had lied to Hijikata, he had lied to the vice commander. The person he cared about.

He headed outside, quickly, all with the intention of drowning himself in freezing cold water to get his thoughts cleared out, so

confused and frustrated he didn't even have time to stop and think before his boot skidded to a complete halt when he turned the corner and found the bath situation reversed.

She didn't notice him. She lay her head on the shoulder before she filled the bucket with cold water and threw it over her. Her long hair was sticking on her back. She washed it with soap and threw another bucket with water. She shook her body since the water was cold and sneezed. He dropped his coat and took a step back, mouth agape before he abruptly turned around. Why was this happening to him?

She heard something and picked up a towel to hide her body. '' Who is there?'' she asked.

It took a moment to find his voice. "It's my mistake. I didn't see anything." ... alright, maybe a little.

'' Aah okay.'' she said and put the towel around her body and then her kimono. '' You wanted to bathe as well?'' she asked.

"Not exactly. Never mind it."

She changed herself quickly in her outfit and walked by, her hair still wet. '' It is yours now.'' she said with a faint smile.

"No."

'' No?'' she wondered. '' I am going to say goodnight to my parents. Good night to you as well.'' she said.

He shook his head. "Ah, alright..." In his entire life he had never been so stressed out and worked up before. He just didn't know what to do with himself.

'' Bye.'' And she walked away. He watched her and slowly turned around, before walking straight to the water and shoving his head in it and shouting all his frustration into it.

"... Hajime-kun... what are you doing in there?" Souji asked in amusement, leaning on the wall and watching a few bubbles coming to the surface.

\* \* \*

><p>Hijikata was writing a poem while Chizuru was sewing one of his haori. Kiyomi came in.<p>

'' Kiyomi-chan..'' said Chizuru. Kiyomi went through her knees and kissed her mother's cheek.

'' Goodnight mother.''

'' Goodnight sweetie.'' she said. Then Kiyomi went to Hijikata.

'' Goodnight father.'' she said and kissed also his cheek. Hijikata pulled her into a hug.

'' Goodnight honey. Sleep well.'' She nodded and stood up and left the room. She went to her own room and lay down on the futon. Just

thinking about that moment... her hand went to her neck again...and held it.

' ' Today she succeed her first execution mission.' ' said Hijikata.

Chizuru stopped sewing. ' ' She did?' ' she asked.

' ' Yes, together with Saito. They are both the master of being stealth and quick to work in silence...' '

' ' So... She will be used more often then?' ' she asked. ' ' She will be happy.' '

' ' I know, that's why I let her do it.' ' smiled Hijikata and closed his book. Hijikata sat behind Chizuru and stroke her hair away.

' ' thirsty?' ' she asked.

' ' Yes.' ' he said.

It was the next morning when Inoue was talking with Hijikata..

' ' but the soldiers saw the, Hijikata.' ' said Inoue.

' ' They were out for a mission. How many times I need to explain it?' ' said Hijikata as he walking in the room for breakfast and sat down.

' ' You know the rumors. She is your daughter.' '

Souji sat nearby, trying his best to look innocent, he hadn't spread the rumor, he wasn't that evil, but it amused him non the less.

Hijikata took a bite from his food. ' ' If Kiyomi choose someone from the Shinsengumi, I want to speak with him.' '

' ' Because you want to castrate him with your own hands?' ' grinned Sanosuke and Heisuke was laughing.

' ' If he is one of the low ranks maybe.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' I can't judge about age difference... since Chizuru is young as well.' ' said Hijikata.

' ' I need to say you are fair in that.' ' said Sanosuke. ' ' Can you imagine if she had something with Heisuke?' ' he joked right after it.

' ' oi! What's wrong with me?' ' asked Heisuke.

' ' Well, uncle Heisuke, if you had something with Kiyomi, you would look like a joke.' ' said Mamoru with a grin and that made even Hijikata laugh.

>' ' Kiyomi with one of the captains...' ' he said while thinking.<p>

' ' get your brains out the rice bowl, Mamoru-niichan.' 'said Kiyomi as she walked in.

"We've got another fire!" A soldier shouted and the alarm bells went off and a group were hurrying to get together. "Let's move!"

Sanosuke and Heisuke stood up. '' Let's save some asses.'' said Heisuke. '' Oh yes.'' said Sanosuke.

Saito was returning from his patrol just as they went off.

"Too bad you're not coming captain! I hear you're good at putting out fires." A guy said, while running off and Saito furrowed his brow.

Was this about saving the cat?

The guys were gone and Osen, Chizuru and Kiyomi were alone... with all the dishes and... leftovers.

'' Why us...'' whined Osen.

Kiyomi stood up and collected all the food together. '' Let's make a nice baked disk of this.''

"Would you like me to help with the dishes?" Saito asked, stepping in.

'' Ooh that would be nice.'' said Chizuru. '' We got so many.''

Kiyomi had collected all the food. '' Mother, I am going to make rice cookies of the left overs.'' she said.

Saito picked up a few plates and took them into the kitchen, except of course some soldiers noticed and made even more comments about that. Calling it women's work, having grown too accustomed to having the women doing those chores for them.

Kiyomi followed with Chizuru behind her. Osen stopped and look at the soldiers. '' Blabbing nonsense again and I send my husband or my brother in law to you guys.''

The soldiers suddenly went silent and hurried back to their work.

Osen looked at them as she went to the kitchen and helped them. '' Very nice of you, Saito-san to help us. We will be done faster.''

"It isn't a problem."

Kiyomi was baking the left over together with extra rice. Chizuru was drying the dishes that Saito was washing off. Osen was cleaning the kitchen.

'' I heard from Sanosuke that he will take some dango on his way home. We can make tea for everyone then.'' said Chizuru.

'' Yes, that sounds good to me.'' said Osen.

'' Mother, there are leftovers of Tofu, shall I bake it as



well?''

Saito paused a moment, but didn't comment and continued washing the dishes.

'' Yes. If you add some honey on it and rolled it through the rice, a bit salt and then bake it like this.'' said Chizuru and showed it. When she was done, she let Kiyomi taste it.

'' Mother, it is a delicious snack.''- '' I know right? Make sure that you bake enough since Saito loves them alot.'' said Chizuru and look at Saito with a smile.

'' If I am not present or sick... Kiyomi can bake them for you if you want.''

"Thank you." Saito finished up with the dishes. "I'll return to my practice now, unless you need more help."

'' Alright. Thank you for your help.'' said Chizuru. Kiyomi finished a tofu cookie and lay it on the plate.

'' Chizuru, that girl has your brains...'' said Osen. '' I know right.'' smiled Chizuru.

Saito stepped to the door and glanced towards the smoke in the distance, he hoped it went well without him.

'' Is it worrying you, Saito?'' asked Chizuru.

"No. I just wonder why the enemy forces have been quiet for so long... and our only use for the time being are police or putting out fires."

'' Well, you stopped Sannan, who knows you and Kiyomi disturbed their plans...'' said Osen.

"Hijikata told you?"

'' Yes. Chizuru and I were looking for Kiyomi until Hijikata told us what she was doing and that you were with her.''

"Mm." He made a sound and glanced away. If only they knew just how he had been with her. They would murder him with those freshly cleaned plates. Perhaps, he thought, it was out of guilt that he helped with the dishes.

'' Toshi told me that our father was there but left. I think he had more plans for Sannan.'' said Chizuru.

"I see..." Plans had not been the only thing he had disturbed that day.

'' Do I make them right?'' asked Kiyomi suddenly with a cookie for his nose to distract his thoughts.

"Ah..." He took it lightly and tried it if only for her sake. "It is well."

'' Aahh.'' she said and smiled, which was rare for her since she

barely showed any emotions.

' ' It seems you made her happy.' ' smiled Osen. ' ' Let me try one as well!''

"I'll return to my duties." Saito stated, heading out of the kitchen. He would practice a little, fill out a report, sleep and do it all over again tomorrow. Possibly minus the sleep. It was hard to sleep with a guilty conscience.

' ' Such a hard worker.' ' said Chizuru as she look at Saito while le leaves.

' ' Mother, Aunt Osen. Let me shop today.' ' asked Kiyomi.

' ' You are going to buy new kunai I presume.' ' said Osen and she nodded.

Saito sat down with his blade and checked it over, pondering on to clean it before or after practice.

' ' Uncle Souji... I think I took that swing wrong from your blade when I blocked it.' ' said Mamoru.

"You think?" Souji asked, grinning.

Mamoru was grinning as well. ' ' Be serious, I try to learn from you.' '

"I'm being serious. Can't you tell? This is my serious face." Mamoru laughed as he attacked Souji.

Saito watched the two for some time, before it seemed to be getting dark and he decided it was best to head to his room.

' ' Eeek!'' yelled Chizuru high when Kiyomi came with blood on her outfit and face. ' ' Kiyomi! Are you hurt?' ' asked Chizuru worried.

' ' Mother, I only killed a half demon...' ' she answered calm.

' ' But look at you.' ' said Chizuru.

' ' Sis, keep some for me.' ' grinned Mamoru and put his arm her.

Saito took a deep breath and slammed the door behind him, heading inside to his room and Souji glanced over.

"I got over it in a week." Souji shrugged, remarking on the thirst for blood. aka, he didn't mind drinking from his kills... and his certain person...

' ' You made Saito and Souji restless.' ' said Chizuru.

' ' I am sorry, mother.' ' said Kiyomi.

' ' Want a lick...from her, uncle Souji?' ' teased Mamoru

"Hmm, I could, but I bet I know someone else who would want to a lot

more." Souji replied.

' ' Really? But Uncle Saito never ever took blood, even he sliced his enemies apart.' ' said Mamoru.

"Oh, wait, you meant blood?"

' ' Duhuh... you and Dad lives on it right?'

"Oh, guess you're too young to get the pun. I drink off enemies. It doesn't phase me one bit."

' ' Your father lives from me...' ' said Chizuru. ' ' What about Uncle Saito?'

Souji rubbed his head, shrugging. "I'd assume he has to get it somewhere when nobody is looking, that or he's starving himself."

' ' Hhmmmm...' ' wondered Mamoru.

"Maybe that is why he gets so worked up, he's starving himself." Souji mused.

"Probably. That guy is stubborn as an ox." Shinpachi stated, sitting down near them.

"That coming from a bear..." Souji taunted. Mamoru was grinning at Souji's comment.

Chizuru was thinking. ' ' Too bad Kosuzu is gone shopping... otherwise we could ask her.'

"Ask her to what?" Shinpachi questioned.

' ' Giving Saito blood. ' '

Souji frowned at hearing that. "He won't take it. Not from her."

"You sound a little jealous Souji." Shinpachi used his chance to tease.

' ' Why should he? He is feeding himself.' ' said Osen.

' ' Why not asking my sis?' ' wondered Mamoru.

' ' Oooh no. She is too young for that.' ' said Chizuru.

' ' Says the ones who gave birth of a twins at the same age.' ' said Osen with a smug face.

Sanosuke and Heisuke came back from the fire. Both were black.

' ' Damn, that was a pity. The whole noodle shop gone. ' ' said Heisuke.

' ' At least his daughter is safe.' ' said Sanosuke.

' ' That was not fair! I wanted to save her.' ' said Heisuke with a pout

"Okay, okay. I think everyone needs to clean up and turn in for the night. We'll talk about it tomorrow at dinner." Shimpachi said. "Oh, also stay away from Saito's room, it's that time again."

Kiyomi look at the closed door before she went to her own room. It was true, anyone getting close to his room would find themselves in a world of hurt, he definitely wouldn't be getting sleep he could tell.

It was late when Hijikata returned and lay next to Chizuru.

' ' Toshi... You need to tal with Saito.' ' she said.

' ' Why is that?' ' he asked.

' ' He is starving himself to death...' ' said CHizuru.

Saito slowly turned over on his bed, staring at the wall. Souji was right next door, he hoped that he wasn't sleeping well either, since his talk earlier hadn't helped him at all and made him feel worse.

' ' Souji-kun... be gentle when you bite me.' ' said Kosuzu softly. Saito's eyes practically bulged. No. No... oh no.

"I'll only be gentle for you." Souji commented back. "Ah... so good."

It was silent for a few moments and then no doubt what the next sounds were, followed by the scent of blood. Damn Souji. Damn him. Damn him to hell. For the longest time Saito laid there, unmoving, smelling the scent of blood and having to listen them the constant groaning. Saito groaned and turned over, pulling his pillow over his head and kicking his blankets off. He hadn't meant "THAT" kind of not sleeping. Those two were so loud. Finally he threw his pillow and sat up. There was no way he was sleeping tonight. He glanced down and set his hands over his lap.

"Don't you turn on me too..." He swallowed and sighed, getting up and out of bed, leaving his room. He needed a walk in the cold air. He briefly stopped by Kiyomi's room. She had said she'd offer blood to him and he almost was tempted enough to knock, but he didn't.

She opened her eyes, someone was standing for her door.

Really, he thought his blood lust was worse than it had ever been, if only because now that he had tasted how good it could be he needed more.

She stood up and opened the door and saw him. ' ' Saito?' ' she said softly.

"I didn't mean to wake you... I was just... passing by. I must have bumped the door by mistake to wake you."

She put her hand on his forehead. ' ' You are sweating...' '

"It's hot in my room..."

' ' I see. I am sorry for this afternoon... ' '

His eyes lowered somewhat with weariness. "Did you get hurt...?" He reached out a hand, but abruptly stopped. Where had that come from? It had to be the inner darkness trying to get to him again.

' ' No... I was only covered in blood.' ' She noticed that his eyes were bright blue in the dark. She flushed a bit...

He leaned a little closer. "You don't smell like it..." yet... the beast silently commented within. His lips twitched faintly as he shoved it's thoughts back down.

She leaned closer towards him. ' ' Did it gave you a hard time? ' '

The look on his face changed and he quickly glanced down, it wasn't still right? If it was he would murder Souji. "No... it's just... it's because of Souji." and then he seemed to realize how that sounded. "No! That didn't come out right."

' ' Do you love him? Or do you still have romantic feelings for my father? ' ' she asked.

"What?" Saito looked dumb founded. "Wha-wha... where... how... why? It... It isn't true... I... to me... Hijikata... has always been like my father... the only person... who ever accepted me for being different... even when my real father disowned me for it... and that's why right now... even though it hurts... I'm trying not to touch you... because it would hurt him... I'm not... I don't like men..." He admitted a lot of things at once and became nervous, as he rarely did.

Kiyomi her eyes went wide.' ' Saito... ' ' she said softly.

"If anyone finds out about either of those things, in the Shinsengumi... there are no close relationships... and touching the vice commander's daughter perversely like I did the other day? It would be seppuku. I... I should tell him though... and face it like a samurai, but to have the Vice Commander hate me..." He wasn't afraid of dying, he just didn't want Hijikata to hate him.

Kiyomi put her hands on his face so he would look straight to her. ' ' I did offer my blood to you because I knew my father have the same problem like you do. You starved to death, you never did drink blood until you tasted mine. If I disliked it, I would have pushed you away but I didn't. To be honest, it felt very nice. Not you should tell it, we should tell it... ' '

He was silent for just a moment, before leaned in and abruptly molded his mouth over hers, inhaling deeply through the nose so he wouldn't have to pull away for a long time. That desperate need he had felt to have someone there for him... he felt relieved, unbelievably relived and he couldn't help himself. And maybe also partly, because he had to deep desire to prove he didn't love men in a romantic way.

Her eyes went wide by this sudden action but she closed them and put her arms around his neck and kissed him back.

One hand brushed her cheek and the other he set against her back to keep her there, tilting his head further to deepen the kiss. Was it

wrong to completely break down in the midst of lack of sleep, starvation and guilt and kiss someone? Probably. Did he care? Not so much.

Her hand went through his hair while she tried to taste more of his lips. She barely showed her feelings nor emotion but now...they were overflowing her.

Of course, she was loved and she knew that very well.. but this.. was so something else.

It was temptation pure and simple, her soft skin... moist lips... he'd never thought of it before, but right now in this instant there was nothing he wanted more.

' ' Hajime... I love you.' ' she said between the kisses. "I have for a long time. Since I was young.I always loved you. ' '

It startled him to hear it, because it was the first time in his life he had heard it. He had not even heard it from his parents.

' ' Hajime?' ' she said softly.

"You..." He didn't know what to say, it shocked him and he wondered just why he had never noticed before. Or maybe he purposely put it out of mind, not able to handle such a thing.

' ' Yes, I do.' ' she said..

"Nobody has ever told me that before..."

' ' I am honored then that I am the first one.' ' she smiled faintly.

"What will Hijikata say if he finds out...?" Surely he wasn't going to be happy.

' ' That I am surprised...' ' said Hijikata and turns away from the corner where was standing for sometime. He had a neutral look over his face, one you couldn't read.

\* \* \*

><p>The battle continues next chapter...<p>

A/N Surprise!

## 6. Hijikata's Reaction Revealed!

Disclaimer: We do not own Hakuoki.

Title: Sweet and Bitter

>Category: AnimeManga Â» Hakuoki

>Authors: Mrs. Hijikata and Yu<br>Language: English

>Rating: Rated: M<br>Genre: Hurt/Comfort/Romance

>Published:<p>

\*\*\_Red Rose Inc. Presents...\_\*\*

**\*\*\_Sweet and Bitter**  
><em>**\*\***

**\*\*\_Starring Mrs. Hijikata as Hijikata Toshizo\_\*\***

><strong><em>And<em>**\*\***  
><strong><em>Yu starring as Saito Hajime<em>**\*\***

**\*\*\_Additional characters also played by Mrs. Hijikata and  
Yu\_\*\***

**\*\*\_This is why we're rated M my darlings, I warn ye to turn back now  
if you cannot stomach it.**  
><em>**\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>"Oh..." Saito actually looked afraid, but not because of getting hurt or beat up or death sentenced, rather the face that if Hijikata hated him he didn't think he could take it.<p>

' ' Before we are going to talk, we go into the room.' ' said Hijikata and Kiyomi let her father in the room. ' ' You as well... Saito.' ' said Hijikata.

Saito uneasily walked in, looking for all the worth like a kicked dog with his tail between his legs. Kiyomi sat down silently.

' ' I have been listening for a long time... Indeed, Kiyomi knows about the pain we three suffer when it comes to blood.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' That she offers it to you... and that you, after all those years fighting your urge and never took a drop... now have taken blood... from Kiyomi... I have mixed feelings about that.' ' he said. His voice was still neutral.

' ' It's hard to hear that a daughter as been...tasted by a man... but it is also hard to see a man that is like a son to me, suffer everyday against his starving.' '

A sharp gasp escaped him and he glanced up at hearing that word. 'son' was that true? He dropped to his knees in a bow. "Punish me however you see fit... no matter what it is... I'll take it..."

' ' Do you love her?' ' asked Hijikata.

"I don't really know what I feel... I don't know."

Hijikata's face didn't change but inside he was smirking... Still shy as ever.

' ' I should indeed punish the both of you...' ' said Hijikata. ' ' ... For keeping this a secret to me... Hajime... this will be your punishment...' ' said Hijikata... waiting for seeing Saito's face.

Saito was internally preparing himself for death, he figured it would be seppuku, he wasn't afraid. He would go through with it without a single second of hesitation.

'... taking care of my daughter.' said Hijikata. Kiyomi, who had sat staring to the ground look up to her father.

"I... you're not going to..."Saito was confused

' No. One: Kiyomi loves you, she made it very clear. Two: if you becomes my son in law... I will be the father you have always seen in me... isn't that right?' asked Hijikata and showed finally a smile.

Kiyomi suddenly lept up and hugged her father, so happy she was. Saito wondered if days without sleep had caused him to pass out and dream all this, how could a good thing like that really happen to him?

Hijikata pulled Saito in his arm and pushed Kiyomi and Saito against him. ' Idiots. If you two think I am stupid, I saw already the glances you two gave each other...' he chuckled.

Saito slowly relaxed, blinking several times in attempts to regain control of his emotions that were about to spill over.

' Are you crying, Hajime?' asked Hijikata surprised.

There was no defense, or trying to man up instead Saito grasped onto Hijikata and buried his face in his chest. To have some there... to be a father for him... the one thing he had wanted so badly in his life... to know that he had it what else could he do but cry with happiness. Hijikata pulled his arm tighter around Saito. Kiyomi lay against her father's shoulder and Hijikata plant a kiss on her head.

'... at breakfast. Everyone is present except you, Kiyomi. You walk in and greet Saito with a morning kiss. That is your other punishment.' said Hijikata. ' Creative isn't it?' said Hijikata with a smirk as he walked out of the room.

"..." Saito seemed a bit nervous now, but he was relieved. Maybe since he didn't feel so guilty he could sleep... provided Souji wasn't still busy.

' Are you alright? You think uncle Souji is done?'

"He's probably not..."

' You can sleep here...' she said a bit nervous.

"I... I didn't mean to sound like that was my intention!"

' M-me either!' she said and giggled a bit. ' Hear us... but it would be fine... if it's only sleep. Relax and just hold me...' she said gentle.

He carefully laid near her, except hesitated in touching her. Still it wasn't something he was used to doing. She lay her head against his chest and relaxed and in several minutes she was asleep with her arms around him. He lowered his head a bit and buried his nose in her hair, breathing in. This person, that wanted to be here with him and be close to him loved him. It felt liked those words carried all the weight in the world for him.



It was the next morning as everyone was eating except Kiyomi who wasn't present yet. Hijikata gave a normal glance to Saito before he ate his rice.

Kiyomi came in and greeted everyone with a good morning.  
>Then she sat next to Saito. '' Good morning.'' she said softly.<p>

Saito glanced at her, but he was still quiet with his words. "Did you sleep well...?"

'' Yes. Did you?'' she asked.

He nodded slowly. "For the first time in days."

She smiled gently at him. '' oi,oi... what is this?'' asked Heisuke.  
'' Flirting with the demon's daughter?''

Saito didn't bother talking and rather ignored Heisuke, while Souji raised a brow. Oh, just what, oh what, was this?

Kiyomi looked at Saito, seeing rice sticking on his cheek and kissed it away. Saito held his stoic face in front of the other captains, but the light color of pink that dusted his cheeks could not be avoided. Hijikata's punishment... it was perfect. It was the most embarrassing thing ever and the teasing would never cease. Heisuke dropped his fish on his lap. Sanosuke spit his tea out, Osen stopped in the midst of eating so that the shrimp was sticking out her mouth and Chizuru dropped her pickles. Hijikata just kept eating in his normal pace.

"Oh... no wonder you weren't nagging me Hajime-kun... you were busy somewhere else." Souji said.

Chizuru looked at Hijikata, seeing his normal posture. '' You knew, didn't you?'' she asked.

'' Yes, since last night.'' he answered.

And why you didn't tell me?'' she said angrily.

'' You were sleeping!'' he said. '' Besides... why are you angry? You know that Hajime is like a son to me...'' laughed Hijikata while Chizuru tried to slap him.

"The hell...? I ought to rip his damn arms off." Shinpachi said, taking worse offense to this other than anyone else. "Saito... you damn pervert... she's too young for you..."

'' So I am a pervert too?'' said Hijikata.

"Hijikata this is different! He watched her grow up as a little girl, that's what makes it so bad!"

''I know. He did. He took care of Mamoru and Kiyomi. But he never touched her in a dirty way. He never did. And Saito would never harm her... if she doesn't want to. Kiyomi is clear in her words. And if he does something that I don't like... He will get trouble with me.

But I prefer more that she ends up with one of you guys that I know for years then with an outsider that I don't know.' said Hijikata.

"How can you be certain? How can you be positive after this?" Shinpachi asked, glaring at Saito sharply and Saito did give a guilty look, because he felt as though Shinpachi was right. He had watched her grow up and took care of them, so did that make him a pervert?

' Saito is working with me for years and no you are doubting him?!' said Hijikata mad. ' I know my duty as a father. I killed Hiroshi as well of Souji's squad when we both discovered he really wanted take my daughter. I heard them talking last night... And they are both damn shy... that they barely did anything then just hugging and kissing a bit. Hiroshi had other plans in his mind... That's why I trust Saito to her.'

"I'm only going to give him the benefit of the doubt, but if I find anything questionable... I won't hold back." Shinpachi promised in a threatening tone. He couldn't help it, the thought of any of the captains with them disgusted him, as all of them had watched the kids grow up and it seemed wrong to him.

' So long as Saito respects her wishes I have nothing to worry about.' said Hijikata.

Kiyomi sat silently and look at Shinpachi. ' Please, don't dislike us for this... Love overwhelmed us... and we both are happy. Is that not good enough for you, uncle Shinpachi?' she asked softly.

Sanosuke look at Kiyomi, how she was sitting there, trying to convince them it was alright and decided to speak. ' Kiyomi-chan, Your father and Shinpachi are both right. I won't judge about anyone's their relationships but be careful.'

Saito merely remained silent, there wasn't anything for him to say, but he did feel somewhat guilty because he thought in a way Shinpachi was right. When Kiyomi didn't received an answer from Shinpachi, she bit on her lip and looked down. Hijikata looked up with Chizuru and Osen as they saw Kiyomi shedding a tear.

She never cried, not even as child when she fell on the ground.

' It's not wrong right?' she asked Saito with a broken voice.

Saito lightly grabbed her arm and pulled her to him, hugging her lightly to give her some comfort. "You didn't do anything wrong." but for himself he couldn't say the same. She put her hand on his chest and the other one around him and buried her face in his shoulder.

' My answer is clear, if they are happy together... Let them be.' said HIjikata as he ate further.

' So.. saito is going to be my bro? I don't mind that.' said Mamoru. ' Then maybe one day, he will learn me his technique about Iaido.' he grinned.

Shinpachi sighed and crossed his arms, but didn't say anything further, because to him it seemed Saito still had that cold and hard outward appearance. He thought she needed someone her own age. She sniffed and look up, her small delicate face under the tears.

"I've just got one question... are you sharing a room now?" Souji tossed in, casually and also knowing he was adding fuel to the fire.

' ' Not yet.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' Kiyomi decides when she want to share a room with him.' '

Saito didn't say a word, Hijikata probably didn't know he hadn't left last night.

' ' If I can't trust my children nor my captains aka friends... Then I can't call myself a commander and a father.' '

"Alright, but who's going to who's room...?" Souji added, if they were neighbors he would stir things up as much as possible. He hoped it was Saito's room they picked. That would be quite a fun time for him.

' ' Don't you dare to stir things up.' ' warned Hijikata.

"... I would never..." But regardless Souji smiled.

Hijikata sighed. ' ' What do you want, Kiyomi?'

' ' It's not that... I don't want to share a room... but the news is very fresh... I think it would be better to wait first before sharing a room. It's better that the fire, that burned up... will subside before we go for the next step' ' said Kiyomi.

Souji sighed. "Ah, that's boring."

Mamoru threw a pickle at Souji's head. ' ' Because you are screwing around doesn't mean my sister does.' '

"Hmm, who told you? Are you snooping around outside my room for a thrill?"

Mamoru went red and ate quickly further. Sanosuke and Heisuke were laughing.

' ' It seems Mamoru heard uncle Souji nightly activities!'' laughed Heisuke.

"There's the real troublemaker."

' ' I am done with eating. I need to train my squad.' ' said Hijikata and stood up. ' ' Ooh and Mamoru, you can go on patrol with Souji.' ' he said and Mamoru jumped up.

' ' Really? I really can?'' he asked and Hijikata nodded. ' ' Yes!'' and hugged his father.

"Oh... interesting." Souji definitely would let him learn that he didn't let people live these things down.

' ' Is there a reason for it?' ' asked Chizuru.

' ' Yes. I intend for him to take over his own squad. Since Mamoru never walked a patrol... He will be guided by Souji.' '

"Goody. I'll make it extra fun..." Souji said. Though it sounded more like a threat.

' ' Learn him the right things.' ' said Hijikata as he left the room.

From that point on everyone just assumed that the two were in a relationship, an odd one of shorts. Though, Saito rarely did see her and was most busy with his duties, but even when he wasn't busy with duties he didn't dare put his hands on her. He was the epitome of a gentlemen. This went on for months.

This day, particularly when everyone was done and went for their duties, Kiyomi was being asked by her mother to wash the laundry in the backyard.

As for today, Saito had already finished a patrol, so there wasn't much for him to do, the only thing for him to do was sit silently in the garden, watching the cherry blossoms fall. This, had left him in deep thought.

Kiyomi had the sheets hanging on the line and she saw she needed clean water and with her bucket to the source. She saw Saito and smiled at him before she was pulling the rope to get the water up. He glanced at her briefly and finding nobody else was around, he got up slowly, reaching past her to help her, since it was a tiring task. It was the first time they really interacted for quite some time.

' ' thank you.' ' she said when he was getting water for her.

"Do you want me to help you? It would go quicker if we worked together."

' ' Yes, that would be nice.' ' she said as she lift up one of the buckets that was already filled.

Shinpachi discreetly leaned on the wall nearby, eyes closed as he listened to them. He wasn't taking chances.

' ' Do you want to wash the clothes or do you want to hang them up? Or both?' ' she asked.

"What would you like me to do?"

' ' Let's do both. You the sheets, me the clothes.' ' she said with a smiled.

"Alright."

Shinpachi scowled, it seemed weird, he'd never heard that tone of voice with Saito. It wasn't hard and cold, but somehow was more or less soft and quiet. Perhaps he didn't want anyone to hear him. Shinpachi couldn't decide if it was because he was guilty or protecting his pride as a man.

Both were washing serious the clothes and sheet and hang them up on the line to dry. When they were done and Kiyomi look at Saito who was sitting next to her, she flicked some water over his face and giggled.

"You shouldn't have done that..." Saito began seriously, before his lips curled into a half smile and he rubbed a soapy hand over her head, leaving a puff of white, foamy bubbles.

What the hell? Shinpachi just didn't get this.

' ' Hey!' ' she smiled and splashed him wet and left a trail of soap over his nose.

Saito returned the gesture, a quiet sound akin to a brief laugh leaving him. Doing something like this, if someone told him in the past it would happen, he would tell them they were completely mad, but here he was, messing around and forgetting his duties... and in forgetting them just for a moment the weight of the world was off his shoulders.

She foamed her hands and touched his cheeks, leaving a big trail of foam on his cheeks and she laughed. ' ' Hajime, you need to shave.' ' she giggled.

Shinpachi crossed his arms, so then... it seemed that this wasn't exactly what he thought it was. Saito wasn't being perverse with her... he was just having fun with her. Shinpachi wondered if Saito even knew what fun was and that he was having fun.

Kiyomi made Saito's cheek clean and smiled. ' ' You should smile more, Hajime. It suits you better.' ' she said gentle.

"I think... that the same could be said for you as well." He leaned forward and pressed his lips along her cheek. Just a brief gesture, he couldn't linger with it because it wouldn't do if someone saw any of it.

She leans in his kiss and held his hand. ' ' I am glad that father has faith in us.' ' she said and kissed him back on his cheek.

Shinpachi quietly got off the wall and walked away. It seemed like he didn't have to worry about anything.

Kiyomi look at Saito. ' ' It was nice, falling asleep in your arms.' ' she said.

"I..." He became a bit embarrassed, not sure how to say what he thought.

' ' It felt safe.' ' she said. ' ' Hajime, if you get thirsty... tell me, okay?' '

"What about you? Does it ever affect you? Or is it different for you?"

' ' No, not when you bite me... well in the way how you bit me. And about drinking blood... Mamoru and I do drink sometimes by our parents but... it is very rare. My mother thinks because of father, who is a created Demon.' '

"Then... the same goes for you... if you need to... ask me." Since she would give up so much for him when it was probably not pleasant... it was just right if he were willing to do the same.

She went forward and press a kiss on his lips. He hesitated a moment, but then decided to push her back a bit further so at least they were hidden behind the sheets before he could kiss her back.

She put her arms around his neck and kissed him back. He was so gentle.. so kind... thinking of her...like she was thinking about him. He wanted to kiss her more, though still, he hadn't kissed anyone before her and although he'd heard enough raunchy stories from the soldiers to last a life time, he wasn't sure he knew what he was doing or if he was even doing it right.

She was grateful he wasn't pushy. Sometimes she did hear stories from soldiers that made her gag but Saito... He was quite the gentleman. He brought a hand up carefully, fingers brushing her cheek as he entangled his fingertips in her hair and turned his head to one side to kiss her more deeply. She leaned against the tree, still hiding behind a sheet and took his deepened kiss with a deep sigh. After the kiss they shared last night, she felt...lucky...and happy...loved.

In this he was so distracted he didn't even hear the footsteps of a few men passing by in the area. She placed a hand on his cheek and pressed her lips closer on his. He groaned quietly and outside the soldiers glanced around.

"Did you hear that?" One soldier commented.

"Think it was one of those damn birds. There. See the nest up there."  
The other said.

Kiyomi opened her eyes and stared at Saito. She heard them. He didn't like being interrupted and glanced over his shoulder, catching a glimpse of their boots only as the sheets were in the way of them and the soldiers.

' Is it safe?' she whispers quietly.

He shook his head, no, it wasn't. But... she was still so close and he glanced back at her. It was probably impossible not to be able to read his thoughts with the way he locked his eyes with hers.

' Just...let's be quiet...' she said and glanced at him back.

"Like... how...?" He questioned quietly, bringing his lips in contact with the side of her neck. "Can you... be quiet?...is it fine?"

She gave him more space. '' Yes, I can...' ' she whispers. '' Can you?''

"Maybe . . ."

She was searching for his lips to kiss as her hand went over his back and the other one was entangled in his hair. That definitely made it difficult for him to be quiet, but he somehow managed it pressed his

body up against hers, he needed to feel her against him. An inexplicable urge that was beyond his personal control.

She breathed it out through her nose and held him close. She felt him pressing against her. He was so close... very close. Finally the soldiers passed on, after complaining about the birds.

' ' Hajime... I love you.' ' she whispers.

Those words, having his name said like that, it made him very nervous, but he took her hand and set it over his heart. He didn't need to use words, he hoped that the gesture spoke more than words did.

"This is because of you. What are you doing to me?"

' ' Letting you feel how I love you...' ' she said and rubbed her thumb over the place where his heart was. ' ' She placed with her other hand his hand on her chest where her heart was, beating fast.

He wanted to say something, but yet again he found himself speechless in regards to this. Instead he leaned against her more, resting his head against hers.

She smiled faintly as she heard her mother. ' ' Kiyomi! Osen is wondering if you want to shop with her.' '

He let out a brief sigh, of course. This couldn't last much longer.

' ' No thank you.' ' she said and she look to Saito. ' ' I am going to train in the bamboo forest.' '

"Wouldn't you have fun going?" He knew women liked to shop, he didn't want to hold her back.

' ' No... Osen will only talk about Kazama and Kenichi, that he is the son that Kazama always wanted...' '

"Ah... the navy man..." He mused.

' ' Yes. Let's go to the bamboo forest.' ' she said.

"You want me to go with you?" It wasn't that he had anything to do just...

' ' Yes, I am going to work on my sword techniques...' '

"Do you want my help?"

' ' Yes... I want to defend my better when it comes to half demons. We can use the dojo here... since uncle Souji and Mamoru are on patrol.' '

"Alright. I'll teach you."

She smiled. ' ' I will get my sword.' ' she said.

He nodded, as he also needed to retrieve his. She pecked his cheek and walked to her room. Another patrol passed the area they had been

at, leaving Saito to decide that was definitely not a good place  
should something like that occur in the open again.

Kiyomi picked up her sword and walked to the dojo, starting to warm up by swinging her short sword. Saito stepped in a few moments later, it was a good thing Souji wasn't here, no doubt his nose for trouble would have found them and never let the subject rest.

She stood there like there was an enemy in front of her and she moved her sword in some ways. He remained by the door watching her with interest, to him a woman that knew her way around a sword excited him a bit. She tried a technique but came out wrong. She was thinking, what was she doing wrong?

Slowly he approached from behind and reached around her, setting his hand along hers on the blade. "What is it you're trying to accomplish?" He questioned, lips grazing her ear as he spoke quietly.

' I want to swing my sword in a swift way so I can cut straight through the neck...' she said.

"From above or below... or from the side...?" He asked. "There are different ways to do it... try for speed... rather than power... and the power naturally comes from the speed."

' from the side...' she said and was looking how Saito held her sword.

He adjusted her stance a little and turned her wrist. "If you turn... while moving..."

' Just like this?' she said and move slowly.

"Just like that. It's perfect."

' Alright. But you also said from below.. how does that goes?'

"It's from a draw stance."

' ' Can you show me how that works? ' '

"Yes."

' ' Do I need to stand like this?' ' she asked.

"Yes, down into a draw stance, it's from the style I learned, so if you're in a difficult situation... you can draw quickly and end it before it starts."

She pulled out her sword but she let it fall and the sword fell on the ground.

"Hm..." He pulled his sword from his belt and tucked it into hers. "Try it with mine... it's bigger, but if you practice with a large weapon for a long time... and then switch to a smaller one... it will feel as though you're fighting with a feather."

She took it and it was indeed heavier but she tried anyway. She



pulled his sword out, slower but it went well. '' Like this?''

"Yes. Just like that. Is it hard?" He asked quietly, it was indeed a big issue for someone else to touch someone's sword, but as long as nobody else found out... and since it was her... he didn't mind so much.

'' It is...and heavier... I think why it went bad with my sword and she picked up her small sword. '' It's kind of damaged when I fought with Sannan. Pulling it out of the sheath goes with struggles.'' she said.

"We'll have it looked at by the blacksmith then... later... for now... stay here with me... because for now no one else is around... and I like being with you like this."

She look at him, hearing his words. '' Me too. You are quiet and... not constant babbling about nothing...''

"As opposed to...?"

'' Aunt Osen... Uncle Heisuke...'' she said softly.

"Shinpachi and Souji as well?"

'' Uncle Souji is teasing... all the time. And uncle Sanosuke and uncle Shinpachi... I saw them...in their undergarments and flexing their muscles to each other... It was embarrassment...''

"Hmm... they do it so often... I hardly notice anymore."

She sat down against the wall and closed her eyes. '' It's so quiet here...''

He quietly sat down beside her. It was quiet here. It was nice to be around those idiots some times for company, but others they were frustrating. More or less it was like family, sometimes you could stand them, other times not. She put her hand in his and put her head on his shoulder. He briefly glanced at her, but otherwise didn't bother to say a word. She fell asleep with a sigh and was totally relaxed. Like she had siad to him, she felt save.

And for once... She was not needed by her family. Her big family... Even not related by the most of them.. and yet, she had many uncles. He shifted and carefully pulled her down to lie more comfortably with her head in his lap, keeping hold of her hand with one and with the other lightly brushing her hair from her face. She smiled a bit in her sleep. He grazed his fingertips over her cheek, thinking that her skin felt as soft as the petals of a cherry blossom. There was no doubt, nothing else could compare. Saito leaned his head back against the wall and closed his eyes, just a moment of rest...

Meanwhile Sanosuke was doing pushing up, of course half naked in the garden while Heisuke sat on his back for more weight.

Hijikata came back from the training he had giving to his squad and sat down next to Chizuru who was watching Sanosuke.

'' I heard from some men that Souji and Mamoru had some action. One bloody mess. I hope it did not triggered Mamoru's lust for blood

since he is drinking from us.'

'Where are they now?' asked Chizuru. 'They are cleaning themselves up. Not wanted to stir me or Saito up with the blood scent.' said Hijikata.

Then after a moment, Mamoru showed up and went straight to his father and bit him. Chizuru rubbed the back of Mamoru. 'Souji, how big was the mess? Mamoru is so white as a sheet.' said Hijikata.

"Hmmmmmmmm... well... maybe a... fifty bodies?"

Mamoru bit his father hard to draw more blood. Hijikata scowled a bit. 'half Demons?' he asked.

"Not at first, but they showed up later."

'I see. But..did Mamoru further well on his first patrol?'

"He did well." Souji replied. "So, where's Hajime-kun?"

'He was helping Kiyomi with the laundry. And after that... Kiyomi said she was going to train.' said Chizuru.

"... oh... "training mission"... I get it."

'Not that kind of mission.' said Chizuru. 'But I believe she is in the dojo.'

"With Hajime-kun?"

'I have no idea.. really.' she said. Mamoru was done and lay against his father. Hijikata picked up his handkerchief and wiped his mouth.

'right away action... you are lucky son.'

Souji smiled deviously and headed off that direction. Souji stopped at the door and opened it. "Ah, Hajime-kun... you got lucky." he decided to let them sleep... he'd just make sure to mention it to Hijikata later, just so he could see the look on his face.

Some hours went by and Sanosuke called everyone for a snack and tea that Chizuru had made for the big family. Souji grinned, because now would be the time to bring it up.

'Where is Kiyomi?' asked Hijikata. Seeing not his daughter present.

"Finally getting it on with Hajime-kun."

Hijikata choked in his food and tried to get it out his airpipe. Souji laughed and slapped a hand over his knee. Chizuru was hitting Hijikata's back and Mamoru gave him his tea.

"They're probably still doing it as we speak." Souji instigated even more.

Finally Hijikata spit the piece out and was breathing heavy as Kiyomi

came in. '' That is not true.'' she said.

'' Kiyomi, come here.'' said Chizuru and Kiyomi did what he mother said.

"And here I was enjoying the look on Hijikata's face." Although it was a good thing Shinpachi was late or he'd have run off to murder Saito.

Kiyomi went to her mother and Chizuru turned her around and slit the kimono of Kiyomi half off so her shoulder was naked.

'' Mom, what are you doing?'' asked Mamoru.

'' Looking if Souji is right.'' she said. Souji continued to laugh, so Chizuru was paranoid too.

Chizuru made a small cut with her nail and licked her blood up. '' She is still a virgin. Souji, stop that nonsense at once.'' said Chizuru.

"Hm, you can tell like that? Better not test your cousin then." Souji wiggled his brows suggestively.

'' We smelled it Souji.'' said Hijikata when he had some air again.

"You don't say..." now Souji was planning.

Kiyomi's cut was healed and she put her kimono straight.

Shinpachi came in finally. "Ah, what is it? I'm starved."

'' Dango, Riceballs...'' said Sanosuke.

"Great-eh... am I missing something?" Shinpachi had noticed the looks on everyone's face.

'' Missing...I don't know... ask Souji.'' said Heisuke with a smirk.

"Just about a training mission." Was all Souji would say, to Shinpachi at least. He didn't want Saito dead just yet.

'' Kiyomi, do you have seen uncle Saito?'' asked Mamoru.

'' Yes, he said he was finishing his meditation.''

"When I last saw him he got a letter and headed out." Shinpachi said, sitting down.

'' A letter?'' asked Hijikata.

"Mmmhmm. It was a letter from Edo."

'' And he didn't tell me?'' said Hijikata.

"Well... it seemed personal." Shinpachi replied. Somewhere... Kiyomi felt that her father was pissed and it didn't felt good.

"Except it was weird, because they got his name wrong."

' ' Wrong?'

"Yeah. The messenger didn't call him Saito."

' ' Then what was the name the messenger said?'

"Uhhh... Yama... Yamaguchi. Yeah. That was it. I think maybe they made a mistake and he was going to return the letter." Hijikata grimaced hearing the name. He knew who it was... but the others not. He hoped it didn't caused trouble. "Hope he's back before dark, since Souji had a run in with those things today. They like the dark most."

' ' I will go on patrol.' said Hijikata.

"Be careful out there." Shinpachi said.

' ' Father, can I come with you?' asked Kiyomi. Hjikata look at her.  
' ' Alright.' he said then.

"Make sure to tell Hajime-kun I'll have a show for him tonight if you see him." Souji smiled and leaned forward.

' ' Hai hai.' said Hijikata and kissed Chizuru bye.

' ' Watch our little girl.' she said.

' ' I will.' he said and took Kiyomi on his patrol.

Saito rode straight out to the beach and dismounted, dropping to sit on a nearby stone while opening the letter. Here he hoped not to be bothered at least, he was weary as Shinpachi had seen him.

He pulled the letter out and read it, breathing in the fresh sea air that played around with his hair and despite the setting sun he was able to read... and suddenly his hand lowered and he dropped the letter and envelope into the sand, staring out across the ocean at the mainlands.

Saito's horse made a sound and bumped him with his nose and he glanced over and untied the horse to let it graze, he didn't feel like going back right now. Still, nothing changed.

Hijikata was walking with his group and Kiyomi through the streets. It was still lively in the streets and people were having fun and talking.

' ' Ooh look, it's Hijikata-sama and his daugther.' said some people.

' ' Father, I smell a wild demon nearby.' she said. ' ' I know, he has attacked someone, let's go.' he said.

Hijikata and Kiyomi was prowling slowly while his group spread it out to surround the demon. When they showed them self and the wild demon turned around, he charged and Hijikata blocked him and pushed him back.

' ' My orders, tell everyone in the streets to go home!' ' said Hijikata and his group did as he said.

Kiyomi stand her guard and was reading the moves of her father and the wild demon while they were fighting.

Hijikata didn't get it, this one was very strong and then he recognized him. It was a famous martial artist from this town. That's he could block Hijikata attacks to kill him.

Kiyomi threw a kunai and it was stuck in the half demon it's shoulder. The demon look up and pushed Hijikata away and runs towards Kiyomi.

She was waiting for the timing. Could she do it? Could she like Saito, do the iado? She pulled her sword and cut the under leg off, still the demon managed to scratch her upper arm. She made a face but blocked his next attack.

Hijikata attacked from behind and slid his sword through the head of the demon and the demon dropped down.

Kiyomi was panting and look at her arm, it was a scratch. She look to her father. A bleeding lip, small headwound and some cuts and he was still standing like nothing happened.

' ' That...you learned it from Saito?' ' he asked and she nodded. Hijikata sighs. ' ' I will hug the life out of him. it saved both of us.' ' said Hijikata and put his handkerchief around her arm.

' ' Let's go home.' ' he said and she nodded.

Blood streamed underneath the handkerchief of Kiyomi. Hijikata look at her. ' ' Does it hurt?' ' he asked and she nodded no.

' ' Father... Can... Hajime stay with in my room or I am in his room?' ' she asked and Hijikata look at her.

' ' You know what can happen... Please be careful.' ' he said, being a dad.

' ' I know, mother keeps feeding me tea so I won't get pregnant...' '

' ' Alright. Just don't be tempted by Souji.' '

' ' I will try.' ' she said and Hijikata hugged her.

' ' It make me happy that... Hajime can be my son-in-law. You made in my eyes a wonderful choice.' ' complimented Hijikata and Kiyomi flushed softly.

' ' He is very sweet for me, Father. When I fell asleep in the dojo, he made sure I was sleeping comfortable...' '

Hijikata pulled his daughter closer and whisper. ' ' Go to Saito's room. Surprise him.' ' he said and Kiyomi stared her father who was smiling.

' ' I hope not with a ribbon.' ' she said and Hijikata burst out in

laughter.

' ' Ribbon or not... He will be happy.' ' he said and she smiled.

Hijikata, Kiyomi and the group were back and cleaned them self up. Kiyomi had put her sleeping kimono on and went to Saito's room and lay the futon ready and lay on it.

She closed her eyes and relaxed by smelling his scent.

Riding back up to the fort Saito decided not to tell anyone about this yet. Especially people that really didn't need to know. He dismounted at the gate and let a soldier take his horse to the stables for him before returning to his room, trying to be quiet so Souji didn't know he was back, otherwise...

Kiyomi was half sleeping. Her eyes were closed and her body was in rest mode but she was further alert.

He opened the door and froze. "... you're here?"

She sat up and nodded. He stood unmoving for a moment before hurrying to close the door... no good if someone saw.

' ' I told my father I wanted to be with you. He understand I feel save around you so he approved.' '

"I see..." He wasn't positive how to react.

' ' We had a hell of a fight this evening, my father and I.' ' she said.

' ' We fought a strong half demon.' '

"Are you alright?"

' ' I have only a scratch... but I could do it! I used iado and cut his leg off.' ' she said.

He kneeled next to her, checking her over regardless. "I'm glad that I was able to teach something useful."

She slit a part of her kimono over her shoulder and showed the fresh wound. ' ' Father was so grateful to you that he wanted to hug the life out of you.' ' she smiled.

He swallowed with some difficulty actually seeing it and glanced away. "I'm glad that you're fine."

She touched his face. ' ' Don't look away...' '

"I don't want to harm you."

' ' You won't...' ' she said softly as she went to his neck and stroke her nose over his skin... for some reason... she wanted to taste blood...his blood.

"Doesn't it hurt as it is?" He started to reach a hand out, but drew it back. "I don't..."

She found a vein and suddenly bit him when she closed her arms around him. He set a hand on either side of her, leaning forward with a sharp inhale, he didn't expect it, but she had been injured. Perhaps she needed it.

Her hair turned slowly white as she kept drinking his blood. She licked softly over his skin as she draw blood from him. Her breathing became heavier. He remained still, it wasn't unpleasant as he thought, but it was also possible that it was just him that thought that way. Her hair turned slowly back to black as she stop drinking and placed her mouth on his, kissing him deep.

That taste, he thought, wasn't as pleasant as hers. '' Hajime... What you felt... please... I beg you... Bite me...' she whispers over his lips.

He sat up and shakily undid his jacket, it just felt like it was too warm and in the way. He tossed it aside, with the edge of the white envelope sticking out the inside pocket from the position he threw it. She kissed his cheek gentle with a feeling she loved him and that she wanted to be with him.

"I really don't understand how you do this to me..." He muttered, kissing her briefly before leaning into her shoulder and licking over the wound.

She buried her nose in his hair. '' Me either... if I see you... I only know I want to be with you...' she said and stroke his back.

"In that case... never mind... ah... not right now."

'' Not right now?''

"I..." He sighed. "You love me then? Right? You want to be with only me?"

'' Yes... Of course.''

"Tell me. I want to hear it from you."

'' Hajime, I love you and I want you to be with me. Spending our time together while we keep peace in this town. Making memories and having fun.''

He glanced at the letter in his jacket.

'' What is that?'' she asked.

He sat up and grabbed it, hesitating in handing it to her. "My... father died... he left my sister with an inheritance, but she sent half of it to me... I... thought that maybe with it... if we bought a home together... just for when I have time off."

'' You mean... if we want to be alone... together...''

"No-not like that.."

'' You want to live us together in our own place?''

"But if you don't want that..."

She look at the envelop and set it against his chest. '' Save it... So... we can support ... our children...' she said flushing. '' If... we fulfill our duty and it is safe, I want to start a family with you.''

"I'll save it..."

'' I want to give them a good life.' She lay her head against his chest. '' Your heart... I love it's beating..' she said softly.

"It's because of you."

She look up and stare at his blue bright eyes. '' I will never let you go, can you live with that?''

"I think I can manage that..." He said quietly, setting the letter aside and leaning in to place kisses along her neck. She held him and give him space. She inhaled deep when he kissed her neck. So soft..so gentle...

The door to Souji's room opened and closed and suddenly he heard a few strange sounds and groaned in irritation. "No... no... please... not them again..."

a feminine '' Souji.. not there...' was heard as well.

Saito glanced over at the wall and dropped his head into the pillow. That was going to make things difficult. Kiyomi saw the look of Saito on his face. She knew he was stopping himself, afraid to hurt her. She leans over him and kissed his lips as she pressed herself on him.

She loved him so it didn't matter to her if he wanted to be close with her, cuddling her... touching her. He loved her... so where was the problem?

"Mm, I can't... not with Souji right there... it... things will get... difficult..."

She wanted to move, as she moved her shoulder to quick and teared her wound a bit open, drops of blood streaming slowly out. '' Ouch...my arm.' she whispers.

"Are you alright...?" His voice was definitely concerned... and strained.

She look at her kimono, blood leaking through. '' It re-opened...' she said.

There was a glint of red in his eyes as he leaned down, still trying to fight it, but eventually lost the battle and reached down and pulled the two sides apart, he didn't quite care if he went and stripped her naked, he wanted to reach the blood that was right there. She was only wearing her undergarment. The red colored liquid was streaming over shoulder down. He pulled her against him while trailing his tongue over the stream of blood, damnit, this was



Souji's fault too.

She inhaled and held her breath. The feeling of his tongue over her skin... She breathed softly out and relaxed in his grip. The beast was once again let lose, there was nothing he could do other than give it what it wanted. He slid an arm under her and pulled her hips up against his, he had warned her hadn't he? That giving him blood was never a good idea. Her blood lust wasn't the same as his, it didn't turn her into a rabid dog.

She swallowed a soft moan when she felt him. She bit the same spot again. Her eyes started to glow yellow as adrenaline went through her body. She felt his excitement for her...

Her hand unbutton his shirt and she touched his naked chest.

He shifted and purposely pressed himself against her, finishing off a trail of blood. "Do you know what you're doing...?"

' ' Do you know what you are doing to me?' ' she said, as she licked the spot.

"You started it..." Even to him it sounded a bit childish, but he turned his attention to her throat again. Even just the taste of her skin alone was better than the sweetest wine

' ' And do you dislike it?' ' she whispers in his ear as she pulled his shirt off.

"No." He lightly set his hands on her bared stomach.

' ' Me either.' ' she said with a soft smile and touched his cheek.

He trailed his kisses lower, towards his hands. If she didn't think he wasn't going to test every inch of her she was wrong. At least... what she'd allow.

She breathed out again softly. She tried to be quiet or Uncle Souji would have the biggest fun tomorrow... or not...

"You're... really... too tempting..."

' ' Well, I can say the same about you. Every time I drown in those blue eyes of yours...' '

"What do you want me to do?"

' ' Get those annoying pants off, they are itching my legs.' '

"My hands are a little busy."

She sat up with a smirk and kissed him while she removed his pants. ' ' Now... we are even...' ' she whispers and lay back again, pulling him against her.

"Mostly..." He leaned his weight against her and breathed deeply.

She touched his firm arms that were hardened by his muscles. Even he didn't show alot muscles like Shinpachi or Sanosuke... It was

there... under his soft smooth skin. For a moment he did nothing and then sighed quietly out of contentment and turned on his side, pulling her along with him. She look at him before she snuggled against his chest. He was warm and it was chilly for her feeling so be in his arms like this...

It was like she came home from a long journey and that she was welcomed.

"If someday I didn't come back... I don't want you to forget me... even if... some other man came along... you'll remember what my touch felt like right?" That, for some reason it was just something he wanted to say. He did live a dangerous life, but still, felt faintly jealous at the thought of something like that.

She snuggled more against him. '' Having you... I don't want someone else...even you are gone... You are my everything...'' she whispers. '' But for... stay with me... like this... every night... everyday...''

"But if something did happen... I don't want you to forget my touch."

'' Then... touch me more...''

He brushed a hand along her cheek. "Aren't you tired? After being on patrol and being injured..."

'' So you won't forget me... how I felt...''

"That's impossible... for the reason you're unforgettable and also because not matter what, I wouldn't let anything happen to you."

She touched his face and stroke with her thumb over his cheek. '' Hajime...''

"Even if it's difficult sometimes... just stay by my side and I'll protect you."

'' I will... I will stay at you side and support you.''

"I can't say how much it means to me."

'' Then say nothing.'' she whispers against his cheek and kissed it.

"I'll just show you instead." He hugged her closer to him. She put her arms around her and went even closer to him. She knew he was a man who didn't spoke his words but showed it instead.

Still he heard an occasional sound from Souji's room, seemed somebody wasn't going to be getting any sleep at all.

'' I never knew that he and Kosuzu...were...you know...'' she mumbles.

"I knew... for a long time..." But that should be obvious...

'' Now I understand why you were always patrolling at night...'' she smiled faintly.

"It's preferable over hearing them... and being a man... makes it very difficult to listen to."

' ' I understand. It... makes you restless.' '

He was a bit afraid she'd call him a pervert, but was glad she didn't. "As well as the blood..."

' ' The blood?'

"The smell of it... and other things."

' ' I feel...how you feel...' ' she whispers... meaning she felt something from him... lower.

He wasn't sure what he should do, or if he should even do anything at all. He didn't think he should touch her that way. She hesitated a bit before she placed his hand on his side and caressed slowly down over his thigh.

"Hmm..." He breathed out and glanced down, not too sure what she was planning.

Her hand stayed there as she pressed her hips softly against his. She brushed her lips over his... she knew he was already at the edge of losing his control... but the temptation to be close with him... was stronger.

He inhaled sharply. "I don't think you want to do that."

' ' How can I make it better?' ' she asked. ' ' It certainly does hurt you...' '

"It will be fine." It was just something he had had to get used to. "I'm more worried about you."

' ' About me?'

"Yes... I don't know if it is the same for you."

' ' Well, I don't know. I mean... I never felt like this before...' ' she confessed.

"I see. Does it hurt for you?"

' ' It's not...painful... it's more... like... something is pressing on me...' ' It made him even more unsure of what to do... if it didn't hurt shouldn't he try and sway her from jumping into something she might regret doing so soon? ' ' It feels just weird... down... I can't explain it...' '

He was silent for a moment, shifting uneasily. He knew his suggestion would make his situation more difficult, but he'd handle it somehow. "Do you want me to do something for you?"

' ' You can try but... promise me, if I don't like it... stop please?'

"I wouldn't keep doing something if you didn't like

it."

' 'Alright...' ' she said and lay her head against his chest. ' ' You can try something...' '

He set a hand on her hip and moved down, taking a breath. He hoped he didn't do something to push the limits. He would hate that. She was breathing softly... feeling what he was doing...what he was planning but she felt he was careful... like she was a porcelain doll. A hand trailed over her thigh as he pressed a kiss after that trail. He was very slow, just in case she changed her mind. Her soft skin showed goosebumps... she didn't dislike the kiss or touch. He moved upwards and kissed along her inner thigh, trailing his tongue in the same path his fingers had taken and nipping at her skin lightly, he had no intention of drawing blood. At least not right now. She inhaled deeply... his soft lips over her skin like...and the weird feeling she had became stronger...

He turned to the other side, still moving upwards. Somehow he had the feeling if Hijikata knew... or anyone else knew they wouldn't be all too happy. She inhaled deep and her chest was rising up... It felt right to her... but... was she allowed to do this? And yet, her mother and father were the same age. For a moment he stopped and reached down, shifting a bit uncomfortable, before continuing where he left off from, even going so far as to set a hand on her hip and start pulling down the remaining fabric, except he glanced at her to see the reaction first. There was no way he'd force her.

Her cheeks became red and she became a little shy. ' ' It's... my first...time...that I show...myself like that...' '

"You don't want to?"

' 'It is not that ... I am just shy... You are very careful... so I am not afraid.' '

He nodded in understanding and slowly removed it, waiting in case she changed her mind. She was looking at him... He gave her the time to change her mind, he gave her space... he gave her... something to live for... more than just only the Shinsengumi.

She knew...the time she fell in love with him... she knew he was respectful and loyal... She knew.

"Are you still fine?"

' ' Yes. Really, I will stop you...' '

"Alright." He pressed a kiss across her stomach, and set a hand between her thighs as he started tracing his tongue over each of her ribs. She breathed out suddenly by his movement... The feeling she received... she couldn't describe it... Why? Why was she feeling this way? Why was she getting slowly greedy... He brought his kisses up further until he reached her neck once more, pressing a hand more firmly against her, while the other one he set at her side and braced himself on an elbow. He wanted to see her reactions. She made a pleasure able face... it felt nice.. too nice...She breathed out again...and a very short and low sound escaped her throat.

"Don't be startled." He whispered against her ear, pressing a finger

into her and groaning. Just the thought of having something else of his in place of his fingers. "You feel good..." For a moment it was an overwhelmingly appealing idea to just do what he wanted, but he put that thought away almost as soon as it came. A whispering moan fell over her lips. She started to breath faster... She looked for his lips and started to kiss him and held his arms.

"Shhh." He began a slow pace, briefly adding another and glancing down between them for a moment, before licking over her lips. "if Souji heard you... or... does that excite you? That we could get caught..."

The idea of Souji hearing them... well, they will be teased for some time but...that they maybe would be caught while...doing this...the thought already... '' Maybe... both... but... it feels...it feels...' she whispers.

"Feels... like what?" He added a third finger and purposely teased her, stopping for a moment before continuing.

She put her hand over her mouth as she arched her back... and relaxed when he stopped. '' It feels good..more then good.'

"That's good..." He licked his lips and pressed harder, all of this was focused for her to feel good.

She buried her face in his neck...and she put her arms around him, pulling him closer. '' Hajime..' she whispers a moan in his ear.

He closed his eyes for a moment, the sound of her voice saying his name like that so close, her breath seemed sweet on his skin as well... it was hard to remain in control, but he did enjoy being able to make her feel this way. She rolled on her side and put a leg over his waist so he had more acces while she puffs out her breath and small short whispers of mains reached his ear.

For a moment he was sure she was trying to kill him and groaned. It felt good to touch her like this, to be able to feel her this close. His hand picked up the pace and he bit along her neck lightly, down her shoulder, his own breathing had increased as well. He thought maybe he made a mistake, it was a lot more strain on him than he thought. The pleasure overwhelmed her and she didn't want to make any noise so she pierced her fangs in his skin and was drinking his blood.

"Mmm..." He ran a hand down her leg that was over his with his free hand, he wondered though, if it was strange to her to have a left-handed touch between her legs or if she didn't mind or if she couldn't even tell.

'' Hajime... You making me ... tensed..so warm...so needed...' she whispers.

'' I never knew this feelings existed...'

"I'll make you feel more when the right time comes..." She nodded and kissed him again... deep and caring for him. He kissed her back, pressing against her even more, bringing his hand from her leg up to grab her chin. "Open."

She opened her mouth like he asked. He tilted his head far to the side and slipped his tongue past her lips, involuntarily pressing his hips forward, it was too bad his hand was between them. He knew he was being rough, he should probably get himself together and stop being aggressive. She inhaled rough... And she shifted closer to him... moving her hips at his pace... It became harder and harder... She loved it... how their feeling kept growing every minute...any second.. He dropped his hand from her chin and set it on her lower back, pulling her even harder against him. He didn't care anymore his hand was between them, he just needed the movement. Her hand went slowly down, between the fabric and moved with his movements. A loud sound escaped him, there was already no doubt Souji knew, so it didn't matter. This time he turned into her shoulder and bit to draw blood. She buried her face in his hair and puffed her soft pants into it so you wouldn't hear them.

"Souji shut up already would you!" That voice came from Shinpachi and Saito glanced towards the door, but didn't bother stopping anything else. He couldn't even if he wanted to.

Kiyomi smiled. '' If he only knew...' ' she whispers in his ear.

He made a face and shifted again. "You'll have a mess in a moment..." it was fair to at least warn her.

'' Let me feel it...' ' she said with a groan in his ear.

"You first..."

'' The move a bit up...' ' she guided him... She had felt... if he went a bit more up... she wanted more.

"Mm," He curled his fingers upwards, repeating that movement from that point on each time he moved. "Like that?"

'' Yes... Ha...jine...' ' she whispers his name and gave him more access.

He brought his knee up abruptly, bumping into his hand with it and groaning. "I want to hear you more..."

She buried her face near his ear and a repeat of pants came out her mouth. '' More... I don't know why but I need more...' '

He turned her onto her back and sat over her, the temptation was clear, but he resisted still and removed his hand, bringing his fingers into his mouth and locking his eyes with her while he did so. She took her change to catch her breath and look at him... He moved down and kissed and licked up her thighs, this time moving between and lapping at her like a cat with milk. It wasn't as good as blood, but that wasn't why he was doing it. Her hands shot to her head and entangled her fingers in his hair. She tried to hold her pants in but sometimes it escaped. Her muscles were tensing... it was too much...

He thought it was a good thing Shinpachi couldn't tell the difference and thought it was Souji. She pulled the pillow underneath her head and bit in it as she arched her back, feeling a totally new sensation. Her muscles were taut with tension.

She arched her back for some seconds and relaxed then. He watched her something like a predator might, but even though he was probably in worse pain than he'd been in previously he didn't want to give in, he had only intended for her to feel good.

She pulled him up and kissed him. '' Lay down...'' she said softly.

"You don't have to do anything for me." He didn't want her thinking she had to return the favor as other males might.

'' I want to see your pleasurable face as well. I was too distracted.'' she teased.

"Mm... you don't feel like you have to right? I don't want you to feel as though it's something you're forced to do." He just had to make sure.

'' No ofcourse not...'' she said softly. '' You distracted me too much to have a good look on you.'' she smiled.

"Alright..." he gave in, briefly glancing at the door. Hopefully Shinpachi didn't linger around. Not that it mattered, Souji was loud.

She put the last remained fabric of and lay next to him as her hand slider slowly over him.

He dropped his head back and held his breath, she would kill him. He was actually a bit afraid now that if she touched him he wouldn't be able to hold back.

'' Look at you... I am the only one to get to see your face like this...'' she said and kissed his cheek.

He let the breath out. "I don't go around showing it to people..."

She closed her hand around him and moved. With mouth she went to his ear and nibbled on it. He was the most beautiful man she had ever seen and he was in her arms.

'' Hajime... I love you...'' she whispers in his ear.

"You're... making it hard to not..." He didn't even get to finish his sentence, trying to hold in his sounds between talking was too difficult.

She smiled and kissed his jawline and his neck, his shoulder... She loved to shower him with her kisses.

"Are you trying to kill me...?" He questioned, bringing his arms around her and pulled her to him.

'' Maybe...'' she said and moved her leg up over his leg.

A knock came at the door and he sighed deeply, that... wasn't good. Kiyomi stiffened. She wondered who that was.

"Captain, you have a letter from Aizu." A voice stated.

Kiyomi look at Saito. '' What are we going to do?'' she asked with her eyes.

He glanced between them, that would present a problem. "I have to answer it... I don't care if he sees you in my bed..." He sounded somewhat possessive for once as he grabbed his pants and pulled them on, getting up.

'' You don't?'' she whispers.

"No." Why would he? "Then he knows not to touch you."

She pulled up the blanket high and rolled on her side so he only saw the back of her head. He opened the door and the soldier looked startled at his appearance, gaze lowering to find that he'd caught him at a bad time.

"S-sir your message." The soldier quickly handed it to him and scrambled off, Saito pressed the door closed and opened the letter, scanning it briefly. So Aizu wanted it's monthly report on the Shinsengumi... he glanced between her and the report...

She rolled back and pulled the blanket away, her black hair falling over the curves of her body. '' What is it?'' she asked.

"It's nothing..." That was a lie, but... he chose her over the report and tossed it onto his desk. He would stay up all night and fill it out if he had to.

'' But..it's from Aizu...' ' she said.

"I know..." He replied, glancing at his desk. If she found out... that he reported on Shinsengumi activities to Aizu... "Just a report..."

'' A report? What do you need to report to Aizu?'' she asked.

"..." He kneeled next to her and brought a hand up through her hair, leaning down to press his lips to hers. Maybe if he just distracted her she'd forget about it.

She kissed him back and released his lips. '' Are you hiding something from me?'' she asked. Sharp like her father.

"I..." He sighed, even Hijikata didn't know... if he told her what would she think about him?

'' Are you reporting them about the Shinsengumi?''

"Yes." He went ahead and admitted it, because who was he to think that he could hide something from her?

'' Why?'' she asked.

"At first... it was to make sure they were reliable... and now... just to make sure they're efficiently doing their job. You can't tell your father."

' We are only playing the fire squad, keep an eye on things and



that's it. Aizu keeps pulling the important jobs from our hands!''

"Shhh..." He brushed his thumb over her lips. "My loyalty is with the Shinsengumi... but I owe Aizu a debt. They only want to make sure there are no problems... samurai have been known to become corrupted."

She stared at him. '' Promise. Promise me you stay here with the Shinsengumi, with me, with my father.'' she said. She was scared he would leave...

"I already promised your father to say with the Shinsengumi."

He hugged him. '' Couldn't he wait a moment longer... he killed the mood...' ' she said softly.

He laughed quietly, a very rare sound from him. "I'm a man... the mood is never ruined for me."

'' Really?'' she asked and stared him with a smile. '' Then put that pant off, Captain.'' she whispers.

"Giving me orders?" He asked, setting a hand on them and slowly pushing them down. He would never dare take an order from a woman in front of anyone, but since they were alone...

'' Yes...' ' And she kissed him and pulled him down over her. Despite having cooled down earlier from having to answer the door, it seemed she could easily without any effort warm him back up. '' If Aizu is trying to steal you away, I will kill them off.'' she whispers between the kisses.

"That would pit you against me... I don't want that. As I said... I owe Aizu a debt." He slid his arms around her waist, holding her against him.

'' What kind of debt?'' she asked as she placed her lips in his neck.

"Mmm, it's hard to explain."

'' Did they...save your life...?''

"In a way, yes." He paused, moving a bit, with nothing between them he had to be careful and keep a bit away from her, or put a sheet between them at least there.

She pulled the sheet between them and pulled then his waist against hers.'' Don't scoot away from me.''

"I don't want... anything to happen... you'd be uncomfortable with..."

'' Your fingers... or... It is the same right?'' she asked.

"Hm?" He didn't understand what she meant.

'' Your.. pressed your fingers in there... it is the same if you... with your ...'' she mumbles, getting red cheeks.

"It's not the same."

' ' It isn't? ' '

"No." She felt him against between the sheets and she inhaled. The feeling already was different. "Do you want me to?" What he had done previously had already been invasive, did it matter now if he went through with it to the end?

' ' Love me... with everything you've got.. ' ' she said

He replied calmly, pulling her along with him while he turned onto his back. "I'll let you do it slowly, so that if it hurts to badly... you you change your mind... I can't stop you." She nodded and sank slowly down but she felt nothing and moved slowly. He pressed a hand over his eyes, gritting his teeth. It was beyond expectation.

She stopped and sighs softly. ' ' This... I am melting from pleasure... ' ' she whispers. It was too much...

Just as he sat up and set his hands on her hips he heard a crash from Souji's room and shook his head slowly. At least he could excuse any strange sounds from his room as mistaken from coming from Souji's.

' ' Uncle Souji! Knock it off! ' ' called Mamoru loudly.

"Shut up Mamoru I'm busy!" Souji yelled back.

"Next time we're going somewhere else." Saito breathed quietly.

' ' Yes... ' ' she breathed out and kissed him gentle. He kissed her back, although, he wondered if Hijikata already knew if he was onto Souji. She kept kissing him while she caressed his body. She wanted to be like this forever. Of course that was not possible but just dreaming about it... He allowed her to do that for some time, but eventually pressed her back on the futon and took over from there, a rougher pace than she had.

He ran his fingertips over her cheek and into her hair. "You're so beautiful..."

She smiled and touched his cheek and his lips as she was breathing faster and bit on her bottom lip. How she wanted to moan his name... He captured her hand at his face and turned into it, pressing a kiss to her palm.

"I..." A faint hesitation. "Kiyomi... I love you."

Her eyes went a bit wide before she smiled brightly. ' ' Hajime, I love you too... ' ' Hearing saying her name... felt as a pure bliss to her. It was a warm spoken name...her name...

It was a word he had never said to anyone before, so it seemed strange for him. She kissed his neck and a soft moan escaped her throat. She couldn't stop that one. He didn't bother to hold back anymore either, it was impossible to for him, he would just frame Souji later. He set his hands on her sides, her face, her hips, under her back, touching her anywhere he could reach, unable to keep his

hands off of her.

Because of that, it was impossible to suppress herself and finally she moaned his name out. '' Ha..jime.. ooh Hajime...''

He leaned his face in-between her neck and shoulder. "I love you so much... Kiyomi... stay by my side... stay... just stay..." He breathed out, kissing along her neck.

She placed her face near his and held him close. '' I will stay...I will never leave... I love you too much, Hajime.'' she pants softly. His hair, his silky dark hair, his warm body against her. His sweet and soft whispers. '' Your mouth...is burning...hot.'' she breathed out when he was kissing her neck so gentle.

Never would he have thought it before, but... he was really glad he waited on that report. She was searching for his lips, how eager she was to kiss him again and lift his chin up and kissed him. Any desire he might have had to roughly take what he needed fell away, now he only wanted to be careful and stay like this.

'' I never though...it would feel so..wonderful... to be like this...with the one you love...'' she whispers.

"You're really a frightening woman... because of what you've done to me..."

'' And what...I have done...to you?'' she asked in a soft tender whisper.

"Made me feel like this..."

She smiled and kissed him deep. '' I loved you for a long time... you have no idea what this mean to me.''

"My heart... can you hear it? It's as though... it's entirely drowned out all my sense."

She lay her head on his chest and heard his heartbeat. She sighs being content. '' It's a beautiful sound...''

He inhaled deeply and sat up, pulling her along with him. "You had better take what you need from me... it won't last much longer..."

She kissed him and put her arms around him as she licked a spot between his neck and shoulder. It seems the lovebites and kisses her from didn't vanished but she didn't care. As she found a vein she bit him and drink gentle from his blood while she made small soft moans in her throat. He turned his nose into her hair and breathed in, pressing a kiss to the place while lightly messaging her back. It seemed that his hands almost covered most of her back and it amazed him that she was so small, but at the same time so strong.

She kissed the spot and kissed his cheek then. '' Hajime... I am close...'' she whispers, feeling the same tension again. He lowered and rested his head against her chest and slowly tightened his arms around her. '' Hajime.. they... they will know... they will see the marks... I...I...It's hard to be quiet now...'' she mumbles in his ear.

He only made a brief sound, he didn't have any words left right now, but even if what she said was the case he didn't care. Kiyomi buried her face between his shoulder and neck and still tried to suppress but when the moment was there, she moaned his name almost in a singing way and relaxed in his arms, huffing softly. The moment she tensed around him he closed his eyes tightly and winced, gritting his teeth and pressing a hand against the floor suddenly. He had always brushed doing this sort of thing off as getting in his way of being a warrior, but he never expected it would be the best feeling thing he'd ever felt.

She kissed his jawline when he was done. '' Hajime... No words can describe this...' she whispers. '' I just... can fall asleep like this... in your arms...

He carefully laid her down with him. "Did you think that tonight I would allow you to be anywhere except in my arms?"

'' No... Captain...' she smiled and snuggled against his chest. He trailed his fingers through her hair slowly, continuously. Though he would like to stay like this, he had a report that needed to be filled out, but he would wait until she had fallen asleep before he did so.

She fell asleep by his caressing with a content sigh, holding him. For long moments he waited, before gently pressing a kiss into her hair and carefully getting up so as not to wake her. She rolled on her back and sleeps further. He gathered his pants and pulled them on, making a face. It wasn't the most pleasant feeling compared to sleeping against her, but he shook his head and moved over to the desk, gathering some paper to write on.

\* \* \*

><p>The battle continues next chapter...<p>

A/N Mrs. Hijikata states, that if we get at least ten reviews, as a bonus she will draw Kiyomi.

## 7. Sad Farewells

Disclaimer: We do not own Hakuoki.

Title: Sweet and Bitter

>Category: AnimeManga Â» Hakuoki

>Authors: Mrs. Hijikata and Yu<br>Language: English

>Rating: Rated: M<br>Genre: Hurt/Comfort/Romance

>Published:<p>

\*\*\_Red Rose Inc. Presents...\_\*\*

\*\*\_Sweet and Bitter

><em>\*\*

\*\*\_Starring Mrs. Hijikata as Hijikata Toshizo\_\*\*

><strong><em>And<em>\*\*

><strong><em>Yu starring as Saito Hajime<em>\*\*

\*\*\_Additional characters also played by Mrs. Hijikata and Yu

><em>\*\*

It was early in the morning as Kiyomi was getting awake from a chill over her spine. She was looking for the blanket with her eyes closed. Sometime during the night he filled out his report and had it delivered by a troop, making it back to bed in time to get some rest. All without her noticing. She found the blanket and snuggled closer to Hajime and placed a kiss on his lips and put her head against his,

She giggled softly. '' I feel so happy...''

"... I do as well..."

'' We need to clean up... and get ready for the day... I wonder if Uncle Souji will be teased now at breakfast.''

He set a hand on her hip. "And if I don't let you go...?"

She smiled and kissed him, which made it more hard to go.

He trailed that hand up her side slowly, around to her back so he could pull her closer.

'' Why is it so hard to let you go?'' she asked. '' Hajime... How much I want to... we need to... present ourselves.''' she said while kissing him.

"No..." He said quietly, refusing to let go.

Souji slowly left his room, stretching with a content sigh. He didn't seem to be aware of what happened, too distracted with his own business in his room.

Kosuzu walked behind him. '' It was quite a night.''' she said softly.

"I think tonight will be too." Souji said suggestively.

She flushed deeply. Meanwhile the others were gathering in the dining room. Mamoru yawning a lot. He had to hear it from both sides.  
>He needed to think of something to protect his ears.<p>

"It seems we really kept up Hajime-kun. I didn't hear him leave his room."

Heisuke was look at the door when he heard Souji saying that. '' Poor Saito-kun... Really, Souji... you kept the whole household awake!''

'' My poor ears are no virgins anymore.''' growled Mamoru.

"The whole household? I scored a new record."

Chizuru came in with fresh made tea and also some small cups and placed the small cups at her place, Kosuzu's, Osen's and kiyomi's

place.

' ' Why do the girls get extra tea? I want also extra tea! ' ' complained Heisuke.

' ' Since when do you have babies? ' ' asked Osen.

' ' Eh? ' ' said Heisuke confused. Kosuzu sat down and took the small cup and was drinking it.

' ' We won't get pregnant then... otherwise I would have now more then 18 children.. ' ' said Chizuru and Osen nodded in agreement.

' ' Me and Kuma-kun as well.. ' ' she said. Heisuke and Sanosuke snorted, hearing Kazama's nickname.

"... how about you stop for a little while." Souji suggest, indicating the possibility that he wanted to have a kid.

Kosuzu flushed deeply. ' 'Sure... then this will be the last one. ' ' "

' ' Where is Kiyomi? She should be here already right? ' ' asked Mamoru.

Souji raised a brow. "Well... we did keep up the whole house as you say."

' ' Maybe she is ashamed to walk in and to face Souji? ' ' wondered Heisuke.

Almost everyone was in the dining room as Hijikata came in and sat down on his spot. He looked around and missed two persons but he didn't say anything about it.

"I must be good." Souji gloated.

' ' Yea... You made Toshizo restless.. ' ' said Chizuru,

' ' Me? Who said to give me a helping hand? ' ' asked Hijikata with a smirk and Chizuru swallowed her food with a blush on her face.

"I didn't even notice." Souji mused, trying to suggest he was better.

' ' No, because you were trying to redesign your table! ' ' said Mamoru.

"It was a success by the way." Souji retorted, smirking.

Sanosuke smirked, what a lively morning.

' ' Hajime, you are sticking onto me like a rice ball.. ' ' joked Kiyomi softly.

"Do you dislike it?" Saito asked quietly, but still refusing to go anywhere.

' ' No.. ' ' she said, stroking his hair. ' ' Not after the night we had... ' ' "

"Then. I won't let go."

She sighs softly and snuggled closer. '' I wonder if they miss us right now...''

"Probably..."

She kissed his cheek as her stomach suddenly rumbles.

"Mmmm..." He made an unhappy sound and released her. It seemed he had no choice.

'' Hey... I need energy...for the next time...'' she said with a naughty smile. A small smile crossed his lips and he laughed quietly. She laughed softly as well and stood up. She saw a bowl with fresh water in the corner and an empty one, She walked to it and put water in the other bowl. '' Let's fresh our selves up.''

He watched her carefully. She saw him staring and throw a towel over his head as she walked to him with washing clothes and the bowls of water.

She made it wet and washed his chest.

"It's a little concerning."

'' What is?'' she said.

"Touching me like that when we have to go in front of everyone."

'' Yea, we won't be quickly done either.''' she said with a smirk. She gave him the cloth and pick her cloth up and washed herself. '' Do you have duties today?'' she asked.

"Just my patrol... after that..."

'' You are free?'' she asked as she cleaned her back.

"Yes." He pulled the towel off his head and glanced at her for a long moment.

'' Did you had anything in mind?'' she asked. She was done with her bath and was looking for her undergarments since they were tossed though the whole room, her clothes. He really didn't answer, she distracted him too much, so no, in a way there was nothing he had in mind per say.''' What about the hotsprings here nearby in the forest?'' she asked as she found her bandage for her chest and her undergarment which she was putting on. Still he didn't answer, more interested in admiring her silently. She sat in front of him. '' Morning to you, Hajime.''' she smiled.

He reached up and brushed a hand over her cheek. "Considering the way things are, it will be difficult to get away unnoticed..." He stated quietly, indicating he had indeed heard what she was saying.

'' I can wait there...and... you can say you have an errand to run...' and placed her hand over his.

"I don't want you to go alone." It was dangerous out there, what if a

hoard of those things attacked?

' ' hmmm Well, you still promised to go to the blacksmith for my sword. We can make a date of it...' she smiled.

"Alright." She gave him a kiss as Sanosuke knocked on the door.

' ' Saito, wake up pal. Shinpachi and Heisuke are betting who can steal your tofu.'

Saito sighed, though he quietly informed her "I'd pick you over the tofu..."

' ' Think of me when eating your tofu...' she whispers as she put her outfit on with a smile. He groaned audibly. That wasn't a good idea at all, then everyone would surely give him strange looks. She kissed his head. ' ' Shall we go together or shall I go first?'

"You go first." There were certain people that he just didn't want knowing.

She nodded and left his room. When she came in the dining room, everyone was eating. She greeted everyone and took her small cup of tea first and then she started on her breakfast.

' ' Kiyomi, tell our parents to not copy Uncle Souji!' said Mamoru. Kiyomi glanced only to him and eats further.

A few moments later Souji glanced up when Saito stepped in and sat down next to him as well. "You're both late."

' ' It seems you as well, uncle Souji, it took you some time.' stated Kiyomi dry and Sanosuke and Heisuke were rolling over the ground laughing by that comment. Even Hijikata and Mamoru were laughing.

' ' That one.. was sharp.' laughed Sanosuke while holding his stomach.

"Actually I'm quite proud of my reason." Souji stated. "What's yours?"

' ' And you want to know why?'

"Are you proud of yours?"

' ' Oi, little sis, did a mosquito bite you?' he asked and Kiyomi glanced at him. ' ' Why are you asking?'

Saito went about casually eating while Souji leaned forward with interest. "Or maybe something else did."

' ' I don't know what you are talking about?' she said.

' ' Kissing marks, Kiyomi. That is what Souji is thinking.' said Heisuke.

Souji reached for the collar of Saito's coat, but Saito raised his chopsticks as a make-shift weapon aimed at Souji's throat and Souji frowned.



"Ah, so close, but you must be hiding something if you won't let me see."

' ' Also mosquito bites, Saito?' ' asked Heisuke with a grin while Mamoru tried to look better at Kiyomi.

"Am I the only one who prefers to not be touched while enjoying a meal?" Saito questioned sharply, glaring at Heisuke.

Heisuke looked quickly back to his plate. Kiyomi bend down to get her bowl of rice and her outfit moved with her, sliding a bit down what exposed more. She didn't realize it.

"Oh, yes. I love being touched while enjoying a good meal." Souji wiggled his brows at his lover suggestively.

Kosuzu smiled with flushing cheeks. Kiyomi sat back and was eating from her rice. ' ' Father, Hajime will come with me to the blacksmith so he can advice me which sword would be better since it is very damaged.' ' she stated calm.

' ' Is it that terrible?' ' asked Hijikata and she nodded.

The door opened and Kazama entered, leaving Souji to give him a humorous look, having discovered the little nickname he had.

Osen smiled. ' ' welcome back. Are you hungry?' ' she asked.  
>Kiyomi knew one thing, if someone could discover it... it was her uncle Kazama.<p>

Kazama arrogantly as usual strode in and took his rightful place beside his wife, except Souji smiled even wider.

"Oh... good evening... Kuma-chan." The moment the words left Souji's mouth a sudden dark aura flitered through the room, a death like glare was cast at Souji.

"You told these dogs such a private thing?"

' ' Ooh shush. Chizuru is calling Toshizo Kittercat seems he is purring while they at it.' ' she said. Hijikata was blushing. ' ' You told them?' ' he said. ' ' I didn't...' ' said Chizuru. ' ' No, we heard it it sometimes...' ' stated Sanosuke dry.

"Speaking of which, you know what I heard?" Souji asked, smirking.  
"Oh, Kuma-chan, Kuma-chan... oh? You finished already? I wasn't even done." He imitated a girly voice and Kazama stood, drawing his weapon.

"Lying half-bred mutt!" Kazama accused and Souji quickly scrambled to his feet and made a run for it, giggling like a child and Kazama charged after him.

Saito merely inched back a little to avoid the two stumbling out of the room in battle. The whole room was laughing, even Kiyomi giggled at it.  
>' ' Know I am very curious what Souji's nickname is.' ' said Heisuke.<p>

Saito briefly glanced at her, but then back to his meal, any

lingering glances wouldn't do.

' Run for your life, Uncle Souji!' laughed Mamoru. ' Uncle Kazama, it seems Kosuzu is his lover!' he added behind it. Osen and Chizuru were smiling, knowing Kazama would add a whole story again about what was possible or not. Kosuzu was piling up some empty plates by others with a smile.

Saito finished up his meal. "Are you ready to go?"

' Yes, I am. ' said Kiyomi and stood up. ' So I walk with you while on patrol?'

She was standing next to him. Hijikata inhaled some breath and felt content... This was the life he had sought in a way. He nodded and started outside with her, except for a moment he briefly stopped to glanced at the cherry blossoms.

She look with him while a breeze lift her hair up. '' Hajime... I love you.'' she said.

He took a step closer and leaned forward... since nobody was around... then... wasn't it fine...? Just at that moment suddenly Souji and Kazama, in the midst of Souji getting grabbed while turning the corner, glanced over to see the two and just as Kazama raised a fist to punch Souji, Souji pointed and prompted Kazama to turn his gaze to Saito and Kiyomi... Kiyomi lean forward as well and put her hands on his chest and brushed her lips over his. No one was around so a kiss was possible, right?

"I'll kill the dog..." Kazama threatened, Souji managed to slip out of the distracted grasp and make a run for it.

"Run Hajime-kun, Kazama is coming for you!" Souji managed to get out while making a break for it.

Except Saito merely glanced over, not showing much worry over it. Kiyomi stood still against Saito when she saw Uncle Kazama giving him a death glare. Saito sighed while Kazama put his sword away, finding a talk with Saito more important than chasing Souji for the moment. Kiyomi put one of her hands in his. She knew that Kazama was also careful with her, even he muttered enough about her father...

Saito lightly set a hand on her shoulder so she would step aside. "A man must face another man in a situation like this."

She nodded and stepped aside. Kazama stopped a distance away though.

>"You... a half breed mutt, do you truly think you are worthy of my niece?"<p>

"No. It's true that I'm not. However... I'm happy with her... and I think that she is also happy with me. Her happiness is important to you is it not?"

Kazama raised a brow and grumbled something beneath his breath, but he did indeed seem pleased with that answer. "Consider yourself lucky mutt, that such an oni would choose you."

Kazama turned away, to continue his pursuit of Souji, however neither

of them saw the more dangerous threat of Shinpachi approaching them and Saito turned just in time to catch a fist in the face.

"Son of a bitch!" Shinpachi yelled at him. "I know what you did!"

Kiyomi gave a small shout when it happened, even she didn't saw it coming and jumped away. Shinpachi grabbed the collar of his jacket with one hand and hit him again with the other, leaving Kazama to run over and grab Shinpachi to pull him off of Saito. Since Saito, though threatened didn't want to turn on one of his own.

"Get offa me! Let me kill that son of a bitch!" Shinpachi complained. Kiyomi was shedding tears when she saw what happened but pulled out her handkerchief and put it on Saito's lip.

' ' thank you, Uncle Kazama...' ' she said with a small voice.

Saito glanced at her and brushed the tears away lightly. "It's fine. It doesn't hurt." Glancing at Kazama he knew that Kazama couldn't reign in Shinpachi, he couldn't let go otherwise he'd keep swinging. They had to calm him down somehow.

"You think I don't know what you did Saito!? I know! I know it! I swear I'll kill you!" Shinpachi was still struggling against Kazama.

' ' We both wanted it, uncle Shinpachi.' ' said Kiyomi. ' ' Both... not only him...' '

"What the hell?!" Shinpachi stared at her. "Both wanted it?"

' ' Yes... We both wanted it. He didn't harm me... He was very gentle and full of patience... He gave me space and time about decisions we were making.' '

"... you had sex with Saito?!" Shinpachi started struggling even more and Kazama actually released him glaring at Saito darkly. "I'm not talkin... that's even more of a reason to kill him! Saito murdered Sannan! I found out today from a man that saw him burying him!"

' ' That was a mission... a secret one. My father gave that order to me and Hajime...' ' said Kiyomi. ' ' Ask him, he gave the order since Sannan was working... with someone who is making the feral demons...' '

"Sannan... was a traitor...? And nobody thought to tell us?! ... and you slept with Saito!" Shinpachi raised a fist, intent to hit Saito again.

' ' Dammit, what is the ruckus here?' ' asked Hijikata, walking towards them.

Souji appeared from behind the wall, revealing he'd been there and heard the entire thing "The best day of my life..."

"Hijikata why the hell didn't you think to tell us Sannan was a traitor?!" Shinpachi asked. "Not only that... this bastard slept with your daughter!"

Saito sighed and now everyone knew what he was trying to hide. The people he really didn't want knowing knew.

' ' I didn't tell anything because there could be more who were working together with Sannan. If I tell the whole Shinsengumi what happened, they will be alert every second! I want to know if there are more in his squad!' ' said Hijikata and then he look at Kiyomi.

' ' Is it true?' ' he asked at her. She didn't gave an answer. Hijikata walked to her and pulled her kimono a bit aside and saw the marks that were left behind.

' ' I hope you were careful with her, Hajime?' ' asked Hijikata.

"You should have at least told your captains!" Shinpachi complained.

Saito though, he didn't exactly answer, it was embarrassing for Hijikata to know that, hell it was embarrassing for Shinpachi and Kazama, not to mention Souji to know it.

' ' Sannan was in our circle. It was hard for me to keep it quiet but I wanted to protect my captains! Because they are precious to me and the Shinsengumi!' ' he said to Shinpachi. ' ' You guys are more family to me then my own family that I had a kid.' '

He stared Kiyomi. ' ' Kiyomi, was he a gentlemen?' ' he asked again.

She stared at her father and nodded. ' ' Yes, father. He didn't hurt me.' ' she said honestly.

Hijikata sighs. ' 'Shinpachi, Chikage, please keep it for quiet until tonight. I will explain then everything.' '

"Sannan... a traitor... then... Hijikata you better keep Saito here under guard... my men still think he's a traitor and Aizu does as well. They'll want his head served to them if we don't get things straight." Shinpachi said.

"That mutt belongs to my niece. They won't dare touch him." Kazama stated.

When Kiyomi heard that she buried her face in Saito's chest.

' ' I will get the evidence..' ' said Hijiakata. ' ' I got a whole list... CHIZURU! GET MY BOX WILL YA?' ' he shouted. A few moments later Chizuru came with his box and look at the couple. Hijikata nodded no and she nodded she understood and walked away.

Saito lightly set a hand on her head. "Don't worry... it will be fine. I promise."

' ' All of you, come with me.' ' said Hijikata. He went to the room that was used for private meetings.

Kazama still glared at Saito upon finding out what he did, but if his niece loved that man he would make sure he wasn't killed. All of them sat down and Hijikata showed the evidence, The evidences from Saito

years back and what Kiyomi had found.

' ' 18 years ago... Saito was shadowing Sannan. At a certain point I noticed Sannan had changed in a way so I asked Saito to shadow him.

>He barely came out as the sun was shining and lived more in the night than in the daylight. He only found out that he was talking with a man sometimes but he couldn't hear what they were saying.' ' explained Hijikata and showed the reports.<p>

' 'Month's later, I saw again the same pattern and asked Kiyomi to shadow him. Sannan wasn't careful and she could see what he was buying, collecting and gathering information for the same man. I didn't know it was Kodo.

One day, Kiyomi heard that Kodo wanted Sannan to kill Kondo-san and me so the Shinsengumi wouldn't exist anymore and that one threat was gone. It was a hard decision but I decided only to call Kiyomi and Saito for the mission to execute him since I knew Sannan had another person under his wing. And right now, I am trying to figure out who it is... that's why I kept it quiet so I could discover it...'

Shinpachi looked down with disappointment. "How could Sannan betray us like this?"

' ' I have no idea... I think he was looking for power...' ' said Hijikata. ' ' My main priority was to keep the Shinsengumi safe.'

"I see... I'll talk to my men and let them know this is a misunderstanding. But you better pick up the farmer that told me this on the street and shut him up."

' ' I will.' ' say Hijikata and look to his daughter and Saito. ' ' Hajime... stay here for now... for your own safety.' ' said Hijikata.

"But I made a promise to help your daughter find a suitable blade." Saito was a man of his word and turning back on it didn't settle with him.

Hijikata knelt in front of Saito and ruffled through his hair. ' ' I think right now... my daughter her lover is more important than a blade... son-in-law.' ' Kiyomi held Saito's arm.

"If... she insists on not going now... then I suppose... it's fine..." He just barely noticeably leaned into the fatherly touch, content with it.

Hijikata smiled at the both of them. ' ' Okay, I go to the man to talk with him. Shinpachi, Chikage... Thank you.'

Shinpachi sighed and Kazama grumbled something under his breath about mutts. Kiyomi stood up and suddenly hugged Kazama. ' ' Thank you, uncle Kazama.' ' she said softly.

"Because you are my niece. I assure you I will make sure everything in your life is as it should be." Aka, Kazama intended her to be spoiled no matter the costs.

She gave him a kiss on his cheek and look then to Shinpachi. '' Uncle Shinpachi... You are very good for me and a sweet man and honest... but I need to ask you, don't hurt the man I love so much. ''

"I might have got a little out of hand when I heard the two of you... ehh..." Shinpachi rubbed the back of his neck nervously. "Sorry for doubting you Saito... it's just the cards looked bad on your end."

Kiyomi smiled faintly when Shinpachi apologized. She leaned her head against Kazama's chest, a rare sight but she did that if she was really grateful to him. Saito nodded to silently accept the apology, he wasn't angry over it. Rather he understood completely.

Hijikata was gone already and she look at Kazama and Shinpachi. '' Don't you two have duties to attend? '' she wondered

Shinpachi thought for a moment and then his jaw dropped. "Oh, crap!" He quickly ran off, but Kazama still stood staring at them, suspiciously. After that news he was unsure of leaving the two alone, being over protective.

'' Uncle Kazama, is something wrong? '' she asked.

"Is it safe to leave the two of you alone?"

She picked up Kazama's hand and stared at him. '' Uncle, Hajime asked me many times if I was alright with it. And that I shouldn't do it for his own needs. But I wanted to. ''

Kazama grumbled unhappily still. "It would have been preferable had you found yourself a pureblooded oni, but I suppose he will have to do. Very well... I will leave you two to your own then..."

She hugged Kazama. '' I am sorry that I give you a hard time. '' She didn't cuddle with any uncles...except Kazama. In her eyes, he was her favorite uncle.

"No. You are the same as my sister in law. You just prefer the mutts I suppose."

'' I chose Hajime because of who he is. Even if he was a pureblood or human. I love him for a long time. '' she said to him.

"Exactly like your mother." He mused, thinking this defense sounded exactly like hers.

Hijikata came back from the visit from the guy and was headed back to the private room since had forgotten something. He saw them and raised a brow.

'' Still here? '' he asked.

"I was just returning to my ship." Kazama informed, heading off on his own high sea patrols.

'' What about your wife to say goodbye? '' asked Hijikata.

"Did you expect me to talk about very private and personal meetings?" He continued off.

' ' For today, you got a day off Saito.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' Kondo is clearing things up with Aizu about Sannan.' '

Though, he felt as though, perhaps he should be attending some duty, sitting around didn't feel right.

' ' Kiyomi, your mother, aunt and niece are trying to make an one big bucket... I don't know why but they can use some help. They are disassembling the small buckets and making a big one... ' '

' ' Maybe you can help them too, Hajime?' '

"If that is your order." Though, in reality he was glad to be doing something at least.

' ' Yes.' ' said Hijikata and walked to them. ' ' Shinpachi...I hope he will keep his mouth... but don't be ashamed what you two have done.' ' he said and hugged Kiyomi and Hajime.

Well, regardless of Hijikata said, he knew he should feel guilty, due to the same facts that Shinpachi had pointed out.

Hijikata ruffled through his hair. ' ' I have two boys now... I can't be more proud. So if they have to say something, ignore it. You only need to think of Kiyomi. She is happy with you and you with her, that is what counts. I know, it can be hard... I needed to fight for Chizuru as well, from both sides... ' '

"I understand. But I also understand Shinpachi's argument as well." He replied.

Hijikata nodded. ' ' Can you imagine I had that with Kazama?' '

"I think... the argument from him was probably a bit different..." Saito stated with unease, as he knew that Kazama didn't like the bloodlines mixing.

' ' And still... I felt guilty about it. I saw the sad face of Chizuru every time when he commented something about me. That was hurting me the most. But we loved each other too much to let go... and that's why we are still together. We ignored the comments and we lived together further.' '

"I see..." Somehow he was slightly swayed by comments, but only due to the fact that he didn't want a bad reputation on them, even if it was more likely the bad reputation fell upon him. The man always seemed to take the blame in age situations.

' ' Hey... you only need one or two who believes you and love you.' ' said Hijikata and gave him a fatherly hug. ' ' But you got lucky, you got me, Chizuru, Mamoru and a beauty of a girl that is my daughter and your lover. So you are not alone.' '

"Yes. I know it well."

He stood up and kissed Kiyomi on her head and... hesitated a bit before he gave a small peck on Hajime's hair. It was the same peck as he gave Mamoru since he was complaining to be a big guy already. Saito didn't make one complaint about it and rather seemed a bit

happy to be able to feel like a son.

' ' I see you later at dinner.' ' said Hijikata and left the room. Kiyomi smiled faintly to Saito.

He snapped out of his peaceful state of mind and back to his dutiful one. "Right, this duty, what is it we need to do?"

' ' Let's see mother and we will hear.' ' she said and stood up and took his hand in hers to pull him up.

"Very well."

They went to her mother and family and indeed, they were putting something together. ' ' Mother, Father told me you needed help so me and Hajime are here.' '

Saito was indeed curious of what they were up to.

' ' Yes... You know, when it is very warm we are always trying to cool down in the big buckets we have... with our feet. So Osen and I thought...what if we put some buckets together and make a big one so we can sit in it?'

Saito raised a brow, that was all?

' ' That sounds nice.' ' said Kiyomi. ' ' Yes, only we need to put the wood very tight to each other for leaking and that is pretty hard.' ' smiled Kosuzu.

Ah, so they needed muscle. That made sense.

' ' Kiyomi, if you can get some wood together...then Chizuru put special sticky stuff on it so it will stick together and Saito needs to keep it tightly against each other.' ' said Osen

"Whatever you need for me to do." He replied.

Kiyomi did as she was told. Chizuru was making more glue while Osen helped Saito out and Kosuzu was making a long rope so they could put around it.

"It seems like you're making it very complicated... can't you go to the beach?" He questioned, not understanding why women always made everything so complicated.

' ' Safety. We wanted to the lake to cool down but... feral demons are there as well to cool down. And to make a big bath here... we can drink sake and tea here also.' ' smiled Osen.

"I see..."

' ' The soldiers dug a hole in the ground already so we only need to put it in there, put the sand around it...and fill it with water.' ' said Kosuzu.

' ' So on a hot summer evening, I can take a soak under the full moon. I like that.' ' said Kiyomi a bit dreamy.

"In a very private place I should hope... the men would no doubt try



and get away with spying."

When they were done and put it in the hole and finished it together. The women were proud of it. '' So, tomorrow we will fill it with water.'' said Osen. '' Let's make dinner.'' and the three went to the kitchen.

'' Shall we fill it?'' asked Kiyomi

"I believe they said tomorrow."

'' You can't take a hint.'' she giggled and splashed a bit water to him.

"I... well..." He started, but couldn't finish the sentence. She went forward and pecked his cheek. "Isn't it a bit... in the open...?"

'' All the guys are doing their duties... the women are in the kitchen... and they know we like each other...''

"I... y-yes, but... if someone happened by..."

'' Want to go somewhere a bit private then?'' she asked.

"Do you...?"

'' Yes. I love you... and I want to hold you. I want you close to me.''

"Where do you want to go?"

'' Do you know a place which is a bit private?'' she asked.

"I think... maybe we could just go-"

"Saito!" Shinpachi called for him and approached. "There's some trouble. I need your help."

'' Can I help as well?'' asked Kiyomi.

"No... it's best if you stayed here." Shinpachi told her.

She nodded and gave Saito a kiss. '' Be careful. I love you, Hajime.'' she said softly.

Shinpachi scowled a bit at that. She look at Shinpachi with a pleased face before she walked away.

"I'll be damned... she did it on purpose." Shinpachi crossed his arms. "Anyways, let's go Saito."

Kiyomi walked around the headquarters, it seems everyone was doing their job, even her brother Mamoru. She heard her mother, aunt and niece talking while they were cooking. A squad of soldiers hurried out, seemed another fire.

'' Mother, I am out for a bit.'' called Kiyomi.

'' Sure, be back for dinner.'

' ' I will.' ' she said and left.

Meanwhile Mamoru was taking his patrol with his squad. He was kinda proud. He did good things and even stopped some fights. Speaking of which, there was trouble when suddenly ferals attacked them.

Kiyomi stood in a tree and saw the fight. She was a kunochi and yet, they still keep her at home. The first mission she was killing Sannan... and that she had fought with her father was also...exciting. She jumped out the tree when she saw her brother walking his patrol and getting into it with ferals. Kiyomi walked further as she sees one of the man she knew, a soldier from Sannan's squad.

The man was acting weird and like he was scared to be followed as he started to back away from the squad. She followed him and when he was alone she jumped in front of him.

' ' What are you doing?' ' she asked and the man glared at her.

' ' As the daughter of Vice-Commander Hijikata I demand an answer on my question, what were you doing?' ' she said.

' ' Finishing what Sannan-san was trying to do!' ' he said and attacked Kiyomi who blocked him and lure him backwards, just then tripping him up on some tree roots. Mamoru looked back just in time to see his sister binding and gagging the poor bastard.

Shinpachi had gotten Saito's help in digging more trenches, preparing for anymore enemy attacks, as the men could not merely stand against the bombardments of ships anymore.

' ' Geez, Kazama left and we got trouble again.' ' said Heisuke.

"You know... something just doesn't feel right... I feel like we've lost our identity." Shinpachi began.

"You would prefer to wear our cloaks again?" Saito questioned. "It is possible to wear it over our western uniform, as it would not get in the way."

"That... sounds like a good idea!"

' ' Ooh I like the sound of that. Hijikata will say yes for sure.' ' said Sanosuke.

"Comeon, let's go get them." Shinpachi said, abandoning his work for the moment.

' ' We stay here, you get them.' ' said Sanosuke. ' ' we need to defend.' ' he said.

Shinpachi hurried to get the heavy box they were stored in and returned with them, setting them out outside.

Sanosuke, Heisuke were putting it on. ' ' That feel much better.' ' said Heisuke.

"Now we feel more like ourselves. The men ought to be happy to. We're the wolves of Mibu again... err, well... the Wolves of

Hokkaido!"

' 'Alright Shinpatsu!' ' said Heisuke.

"Feels like old times." Shinpachi picked up his shovel and dug with much more energy. They worked indeed harder and putting up the defenses.

Saito and Shinpachi finished several trenches and then headed out along the road on their own patrol. They were going to let their colors show once more. Shinpachi and his squad continued on, flying their sky blue cloaks, boarded by the white mountains. Everyone on this island would soon know that they were indeed the Shinsengui.

Saito, however was told by Shinpachi as thanks for the idea to boost moral, that he could return early. And for the most part he did, but he had other plans in mind.

Saito had wanted time on his own to think for a little while and headed down to the beach he usually frequented. The one with a view of the mainland. The Shinsengumi were here on Hokkaido, the Aizu were here, but somehow he felt a sense of loss, even if this were the correct thing to do to retreat here to this safe haven.

The only question in his mind now as he removed his cloak and jacket and sat down in his usual place to think was... how long would this war last?

After that incident in capturing the spy she was praised with pride by her father and permitted time off. Danger or not... Kiyomi took a stroll at the beach, she loved the salty air, it was fresh.

A angry seagull was screaming against his rival that was eating his fish it seems. She giggled, seeing it happen. It reminded her of Shinpachi and Heisuke.

She walked further and saw him so quiet as she was, she sneaked to him and closed her arms around him. Even though it surprised him, he didn't give a startled reaction, rather continued watching the waves for a few moments.

"What are you doing all the way out here?"

' ' Taking a stroll. I worked too. I caught the last guy who was working with Sannan. It was a bit of a fight but I won easily. Father was proud.' '

"Alone?" He sounded concerned.

' ' Yes. I was taking a walk when I saw him and discovered it. I lured him to the forest and made traps and caught him.' '

"What if you had been injured? You were alone... if something happened... nobody would have been around to help..."

' ' I thought about it very well. I made traps. I was glad I caught him... He had potions and other stuff from Kodo. Plans to make more wild demons. I stopped him and I saved people. Or did I had to let him go?' ' she asked softly.

"That's not what this is about..." He became a bit frustrated with her changing it all around on him.

' ' I am sorry. I won't do it again.' ' she said. He was worried about her. She understood that.

"No... I... can't ask you to do that either."

' ' I just... wanted to do something... for the Shinsengumi. Mamoru... Uncle Kondo promoted him to captain and he gets experience and learns more and more.' ' She said and realized she was... jealous of her brother.

"Your time will come... when you get to achieve great things for the Shinsengumi... I can't ask you not to do those things... so forget I said anything at all." He felt a bit defeated, because when it came down to it duty overwhelmed anything else, even his own selfish desires.

' ' Hajime...' ' she said and snuggled against him.

"I understand duty more than anyone... so do whatever you need."

' ' Thank you and I will be careful, really.' ' she said and look at him.

"I hope so." He said quietly, eying the mainland.

' ' I am... I want to live a happy life with everyone, with you... here. And maybe one day, we will have a family for us self.' '

He sighed quietly, remaining silent. He couldn't exactly make a promise to survive the long and neither could she.

' ' Hey... stay positive.' ' she smiled faintly. ' ' You never though someone would love you and here I am...' '

"That's true..."

' ' Shall we go.. on a date? Getting to the blacksmith and after it something to eat...? He glanced at her and smiled faintly. She smiled faintly as well. ' ' I want to make a lot of memories with you.' '

"There will be a lot."

She pecked his lips and touched his cheek. ' ' Shall we go then?'

Instead of answering, he felt a bit distracted and pulled her closer to kiss her back, no, if she thought she could get away with distracting him she was wrong. She look at him before she closed her eyes. Every time he kissed her, she felt how he needed her and she needed him. She put her arms around him and kept kissing him as well. He thought that here probably wasn't the place, but then also thought that here also was the best place, because nobody else would be around.

' ' There is nearby an old deserted fishing cabin. No is using it...' '

she said softly against his lips.

"I thought you wanted to get a sword."

' ' You are distracting me...' ' she said and put her head under his chin.

"But you started it..." He replied while pulling her into his arms more closely.

' ' Because I can't resist your look.' ' breathing in his scent.

"What look?"

' ' The look that is only for me. If you look at me, it is so..different, so special.' '

"Ahh... that kind..."

She placed a peck in his neck. ' ' Shall we go then? I really need to get a new one.' '

He inhaled deeply, that was a particularly sensitive place. "Y-yes. We'll go then..."

They walked to the blacksmith. ' ' Shall I come to you again or do you want to sleep in my room?'

"Which ever you would prefer..." Still he rubbed the spot where she had kissed him.

' ' My room is next to Kosuzu but she will be with Souji and since my room is on a corner...' ' she smiled faintly. ' '... It will be more quiet...' '

"That's true... away from Souji..."

' ' Yea... from a lot of people even. I really sleep at a quiet spot. You only hear the owl sometimes.' '

"You're lucky with that."

She nodded and they arrived at the blacksmith. The smith look at the sword and told her it was better to buy a new one since it the crack was deep. So she looked around in his shop for a new one. Saito glanced at them carefully and checked them all over casually. She saw one. She picked it up and felt it was light and yet, the sword itself was strong.

He picked up one specific one and checked it over, curious, however it didn't seem to please him and he set it back. She picked up another one, It was a bit heavier but the metal was flexible. The lemmet was black with blue. She hold it and gave a swing to try out. It felt nice in her hands too.

' ' Hajime, is this a good one?' ' she asked.

"Let me see..."

She handed him over the sword. He glanced at the blacksmith briefly,

giving him a look requesting to be able to disassemble the blade, which seemed to be approved and so he pulled the blade from the hilt and glanced at the carving.

"I had thought that was what it was... this blade is like your father's. A Kanesada. You have that in common to pick the same weapon."

' ' Really? So this is a good one?'

"The was made by Aizu Kanesada eleventh generation... this Kanesada Koshirae is perfect." Saito replied, putting the blade back into the handle.

' ' Then I will take it.' ' she smiled faintly. Kiyomi paid for her sword. The blacksmith nodded and made the sentence in her new brand sword. ' ' Can you find any?'

Somewhere down the street there was a scream heard. "Now is the time... for you to test it's abilities." Saito had the feeling it had to be half demons causing the trouble.

She was looking and found a half demon. She drew her weapon and attacked the demon with a swing. She could handle the katana well. Saito remained off to the side, not wanting to interfere unless needed. The demon growled at her and she stood in her fighting stance. The demon made a attack towards her legs and she jumped away and cut his back. The demon screamed.

Kiyomi gave a swing so the blood went off and put it back in the hilt and stood in the stance to pulled her katana quick. He was too distracted watching over her in case she needed help, he didn't even notice the man poised on the roof, his uniform colors made him a target. Not until the gun went off and he felt the sting in his side.

He glanced over his shoulder, drawing his weapon, but the man on the roof made a break for it and ran. Saito wasn't in a position to chase him and instead glanced down at his side, being what he was... it wouldn't kill him, but it stung. But this did indeed trouble him, because it meant government forces infiltrated somehow. Or there were paid off spies.

Kiyomi drew her weapon and cut off the head and ran to Saito. ' ' You are bleeding, are you alright?' ' she asked.

"It's just a scratch." He answered, putting his weapon away and glancing down. Perhaps it wasn't healing quite as quick as it normally would. "Do you have a very small blade by chance?"

' ' Yes, I have my kunai.'

"May I see it for a moment?"

She nodded and gave the kunai to him. He took the small blade from her and leaned on the wall, driving the blade into the wound, with only a pained intake of breath and a shaky hand, but otherwise no other signs of pain, he dug out the small bullet and the fabric of his jacket that went in with it. Except his seemed perplexed upon seeing the different type of metal the bullet was made of.

"Just what is this?"

Kiyomi look at it and cleaned it. '' It's...silver...''

"... I see..." He handed her back her weapon and searched in his breast pocket for a cloth to press over the injury. "It burns... quite badly... it would seem... that is a weakness... or so... I should assume."

'' Let's go back. My father should know this and...you need to drink my blood.''

He glanced at her and was silent for a long moment, contemplating. "It may be so that it is a weakness for us, but also that they have discovered this, means that we now know it and can also use it to our own advantage."

She nodded. '' Let's go then.''' she said.

He slowly followed along with her, the only side affect was he felt tired. They would have to be careful from now on. They arrived after the walk and she called her father and everyone else.

'' Hajime, tell them, I'm getting bandages.''' said Kiyomi and left the main room.

'' What did they used on you, Hajime?'' asked Hijikata worried.

Saito held out the bullet. "It would seem they discovered some weakness, but our weakness is their weakness."

Hijikata look at the silver bullet. '' You got a plan?'' he asked.

Kiyomi came back and without any excuse, she opens Saito's uniform and start to clean the wound. Sanosuke raise a brow. That was weird. Kiyomi got a wet cloth and made sure his it was clean.

Saito averted his eyes to hide a pained look as he raised his arm to give her room. "I believe we should arm our men with guns that have silver bullets as well and even possibly line our blades with it."

''Hhmmm... That sounds good to me. The guy that Kiyomi caught told me that some knew indeed our secret. So Chizuru is planning something as well.

'' Hajime, I am going to put three stitches. I am sorry if I hurt you.''' she said.

"I am costume to pain." He replied casually, he wouldn't dare show pain in front of anyone, he would hide it well. "They've unknowingly given us their knowledge. So we can use it against them. The half demons, and their mutations... won't last long now that we know this. They can send as many as they'd like, but they have given themselves away now."

Hijikata smirked. '' True. Good observation, Hajime.''' he

complimented him. Mamoru was thinking. '' I heard from a local, they are active especially at full moon, too bad that was a week ago. ''

Kiyomi was giving him stitches and started to put a bandage around him. '' Give it some rest and no heavy training or movements. '' she said.

"Just what were you two doing out there all alone in the first place?" Souji questioned, leaning forward.

'' Hajime helped me to get a new sword. '' she said and showed it him. '' Mine was very damaged. Then we heard someone yelling. ''

"I thought he already had a sword for you..." Souji added suggestively. She blushed slightly at the comment and worked further on the wound. "But then again maybe it was too small for you..."

She wanted to say something... defending him but she kept quiet but her face showed something else... irritated. Sanosuke his eyes went wide and look at Shinpachi.

"He's a short guy with a short sword, she must have wanted something longer." Souji mused.

'' You don't even know. That you need brute force to love Kosuzu doesn't mean Hajime does! '' she said now. '' You kept everyone awake and broke even stuff! You did it like a streetdog! '' she snapped.

"Hmmmm, sounds like I hit a nerve." Souji smirked.

She went back to the bandage and finished it. She dried the corner of her eye. '' You lost a lot of blood... '' she said to Saito.

"It's fine. I've had worse." Saito answered, not swayed by Souji's teasing.

'' I am going to talk with Chizuru, she said she had a good idea... '' said Hijikata.

It was a good thing she hadn't bit and marked him around the chest nor stomach. His uniform was hiding perfectly her love bites and kissing marks.

"Please do so, Vice Commander and inform me of the developments." Saito replied, he looked at him as a father and would call him less formally only when the rest of the men were not present, in the presence of the men he would be nothing but formal.

'' On second thought Hajime, Kiyomi, come with me. '' said Hijikata. '' Chizuru need to see the bullet as well and they need to hear your story. ''

It was true but also an excuse. Hijikata was a bit worried about the wound.

'' Souji, Shinpachi... you two have patrol. Heisuke, Sanosuke, check the squads if everything is alright. ordered Hijikata.



Souji stood up and gave a brief pat of the shoulder to Saito before he and Shinpachi headed out. "I'll make sure to catch the guy that got you."

Kosuzu walked by and saw Souji. "' Be safe on your patrol.'" she said with a gentle smile.

"They won't even get close to me." Souji sounded smug and sure of it. Kosuzu kissed him goodbye. Hijikata took Saito and Kiyomi with him to Chizuru who was busy in her room.

Saito did his best to follow along and not show he felt sick, but it was a side effect he would have to mention.

They sat down, Chizuru, Hijikata Kiyomi and Saito. Hijikata showed the bullet. "' I see. Pure silver. We purebloods will be sick a bit but halfblood like you... will have more trouble. You have pain, don't you?" asked Chizuru to Saito.

"' Hajime, you look pale..." said Kiyomi softly.

"Like the sting of a bee, there's a bit of a sickly feeling as well, but it is nothing. I will be fine. For a lesser man it would cause trouble."

"' Sting..." said Chizuru and went to her desk and wrote some things down.

"' Hajime, if you need my blood...say so.'" said Kiyomi a bit worried.

"' That would be a good idea.'" said Hijikata and went now close to Saito. "' You look indeed a bit pale.'" he said while he touched Saito's head to check if he didn't had a fever, all being a daddy around him.

"It will be fine." He assured, this wasn't enough to put him out of commission.

Chizuru came back. "' You gave me a wonderful idea... Hajime..." she said. Chizuru gave Saito a potion. "' This will reduce the pain a bit..."

He took it with a nod.

Hijikata was thinking. "' Maybe we should wear extra protection..."

"We also can't weigh our movement down too much."

"' I know..." said Hijikata still thinking. "' I need to think this out. Anyway, go rest, Hajime. No doubt Kiyomi takes care of you.'" said Hijikata.

"I feel as though I should be doing something other than lying around."

"' And re-open your wound that Kiyomi stitched so carefully?"

"It will be fine. I need to do my duty, not laze about in bed."

' I see.' said Hijikata and look at Chizuru.

' If he is doing his reports or training his squad, I don't see a reason to stop him.' she said.

"Then I'll focus on my reports for the time being. My men are resting from their long day. Is there anything else you would like to say?"

' Yea, be time on dinner.' said Chizuru and gave him for the first time a motherly smile. He nodded and left the room to return to his own to gather up his reports. At least he could do something, he hated sitting about and not working. Hijikata was working as well on his duties. Kiyomi went to kitchen and started to make the preparations for Dinner.

Except during this time he really didn't feel well and felt his stomach churn, maybe this was a bad idea after all... he swallowed with difficulty and continued with his reports.

Kiyomi had made tea for Saito and walked to his room. ' Hajime, I made some tea for you.' she said.

For a long moment he was silent, working on controlling his voice to answer so nothing seemed wrong. "Come in."

She came in and sat down next to him when she smelled it. ' You are bleeding again.' she said softly.

He paused and set the pen down and glanced at himself, sighing. "I haven't hardly done a thing..."

' Let me see it.' she said softly.

"Then do so." Still, he wasn't at all happy with not being able to work.

She opened his shirt and saw blood on his bandage. She stood up and was getting stuff from his drawer and went back. She put the dirty bandages off and cleaned his wound. She gave him extra stitches and put clean bandages on.

' Hajime... aren't you thirsty...you really did lost some blood...'

"Yes, but... I don't want to bother you..."

' You won't... ' she said and slit her outfit from her right shoulder so that her neck and shoulder was exposed. ' If you drink my blood, you will heal faster as well.'

He set a hand on her back and pulled her to him, hugging her to him instead and sighing deeply. It made him feel a bit better already just having her close. She was a bit startled by this action but hugged him back and buried her nose in his hair. He rested his head on her shoulder with his eyes closed breathing slowing more into that of a sleeping pace. It would be so easy to fall asleep right now. She was breathing softly and was stroking his hair slowly and gentle. She was humming softly a song, one her mother always sang when she was

little. He sighed quietly and tightened his hold on her. She smiled faintly and gave a peck on his hair. She loved moments like these...

"I probably can't hide... that right now I'm not feeling well..."

"No... not for me. I love you too much to ignore it..." she whispers.

"Promise me you won't get hit with one of these... it would be quite unpleasant."

"I promise." she said and kissed his cheek.

"Then again... perhaps your blood is stronger than mine, but as it stands, it still wouldn't be pleasant at all." He turned more into her neck and breathed in deeply, pressing a kiss there.

"Who knows... I still have my mother's blood... she is that strong to turn my father into a fullblood oni... that's why I want you to drink it... so you can heal... I can't see you in pain." she shivered.

"Mm," He placed another kiss there.

"..." a soft sound escaped her mouth. His lips were so soft... the goosebumps were already on her back.

"Those sounds you make..." He pulled her into his lap and held her there, continuing to kiss around the same area. "Do you feel what you do to me?"

"Y-yes..." she sighs when she put her hands on his back and caressed him softly

"Souji is on patrol..."

"Do you...?" she asked softly.

"Do I want to what...?" He breathed in deeply and pressed his hips up against hers. It was an appealing idea because Souji wasn't around.

"nnnhh..." she moaned softly when she felt him. "Hajime..."

The only thing he could hope for now was that Souji wouldn't interrupt by returning anytime soon. She was searching for his lips and found them, licking his lips. He set a hand on his desk and brushed his paperwork aside, no, not off, not in a big messy pile where ink could spill on his precious work, but just off to the side safely. He wasn't a stupid heat of the moment man.

She placed her hand on his cheek as she asked with her tongue to enter his mouth in a gentle way. Not the nasty one that people could read in those small booklets. No, the sweet loving way. He tilted his head to one side and parted his lips, allowing her what she wanted. He pressed himself against her again, setting his hands lower on her back to keep her close. She had the access she wanted and kissed him deeper and moved with her hips to meet his. She breathed out deep

through her nose. He lifted her and set her on his desk, sitting up to get closer to her there, except he felt a pull at his side and realized he would have to be more careful.

' ' Are you alright?' ' she whisper.

"Don't worry over it."

' ' Ok...' ' she said and kissed his neck softly as she placed her hands on his chest. A low groan left him and he leaned his head to the other side, this was too good for him really. She kept him kissing there with small moans that slipped her lips when she kissed him. When she found a spot she liked, she started to nibble on it softly. He set his hands on her hips and relaxed. It was definitely too good to be true to have someone that actually wanted to be with him. She kissed his neck again and then his jawline and from there slowly to his ear. ' ' Hajime... When I think of you... my heart beat faster and faster. Your voice is like music in my ears...' ' she whisper sweet words to him.

"Mine? I think it's yours that is... you're really too good for me."

' ' Because I love you... I belong to you...and you to me...' '

Rubbing his eyes he let out a shaky breath. It was hard to hold back. She put down her kimono, revealing herself in her undergarments. The she slit of Saito's shirt so he was half naked as well and pressed softly her lips on his while she felt his warm skin.

"Are you sure that you want to?"

' ' If I didn't I would have stopped you...' ' she said honestly.

His breathing increased as he set a hand on either side of her on the desk. Still he wasn't exactly sure of himself in these things, maybe in the future he would be, but for now in this matter he just wasn't confident in himself. She swallowed seeing him like this. She moved a bit forward so her hips met his and felt him that he was longing for her. A soft whimper came out her throat.

"To hear you like that..." He couldn't think of words to say it.

' ' I...restrained...myself...the first time...since everyone...was present...' ' she whispers heavy.

"Mmm." If she could sound like that, he wondered if she really were restraining herself or if maybe he just wasn't that good at it the first time around.

' ' You give me goosebumps... hearing you...' '

"I suppose it's the same for me..."

She kissed him and removed slowly his pants. Only one piece away and they were full naked but Kiyomi couldn't decide to remove them or keep stroking and touching his body while she kissed him. Just as he relaxed a bit there was a knock at the door and he lowered his head in defeat. It never failed... it was always something.

She put her kimono on but she didn't tied it. '' Shall I answer it?'' she asked.

He sighed deeply and shook his head. "I will."

'' I will do it... put your papers back like you were still working.'' she said and stood up.

"I'm sorry."

She pecked his head and walked to the door while she tied her outfit in a loose way. She opened the door and look who there stood.

"... uhhhh..." The messenger looked shocked to see her there and, unabashed looked her over. "T-t-the captain isn't in?"

'' He is resting.'' she answered. '' Do I need to deliver a message to him?''

"A letter from the Aizu." The soldier viewed her with interested as he prepared to hand over the letter. There was no doubt what was on his mind.

She took the letter. '' When he is awake, I will tell him.'' she said. Except Saito stepped up behind her and put his arms around her, pressing a kiss to her shoulder and glaring at the soldier and the man stiffened up and looked away.

"If that's all... leave."

'' I thought you were sleeping', Itoshii.'' she said softly and kissed his cheek in front of the messenger. The messenger quickly walked away and Saito pushed the door closed.

"I didn't like him looking at you..."

'' Ah... well... you left the impression quite well I belong to you.'' she smiled.

"That was my exact intent."

She smiled and kissed him . '' ... hmmm... why I can't get enough of your lips?''

"I'm not sure... probably the same reason I can't of yours."

She hugged him. '' Hajime...'' she said with a soft tone, only meant for him.

He sighed and hugged her back, really though he was getting tired of putting his pants on in tight situations such as these. They were troublesome. He wondered if just once they could go uninterrupted. She undid his pants again and her outfit and kissed his chest.

"Do you really think that we will be uninterrupted? I have my doubts..."

'' I doubt they will interrupt...when... I moan your name...'' she smiled a bit naughty in a cute way.

"Hmmm..." He hugged her closer.

' ' Your futon... it's still on the ground...' ' she said and kissed his neck once again.

"I'm quite well aware of that."

' ' I think you need to rest...my captain.' ' she giggled.

"Do you think so?"

' ' Yes...' ' she said and lead him to the futon and pressed gentle on his shoulders so he would go down on his knees.

A door opened and closed in the other room and it seemed that Souji had returned.

She placed his head against her stomach. ' ' It seems he is back...' '

He sighed unhappily. "So it seems..."

' ' My room tonight... my only neighbor is Kosuzu and she is with him...' ' she said and stroke his hair.

"Yes, it sounds like a good idea." He replied, agreeing to that idea. "Perhaps... if you wouldn't mind... could I remain with you permanently."

Her face lighted up and she hugged him. ' ' Yes... always...' '

"I think I could work in peace there as well."

' ' Want to move over there then?' ' she said.

"Yes..." He smiled.

She smiled as well and press a kiss on his hair. ' ' Let's pack things up then.' ' she said.

"We'll leave them for tonight."

' ' You want to go right away?' 'she asked.

"Yes... because I'm sure someone has been waiting for him..."

' ' Ah... I get it...' ' she said. ' ' Then let's go. Take thing what you need and let's go.' '

"I don't have much. Only my papers. That's all."

' ' Alright let's go quickly.' ' she said when she heard Kosuzu giggle. He redressed himself and gathered his important papers. She did the same and took at least his sleeping kimono and some fresh undergarments with her. They went to her room and she opens the door.

' ' You can work on my desk.' ' she said.

"Thank you."

She opens her closet which was very neat and she placed his sleeping kimono and undergarments on a shelf. 'I put some fresh clothes of you in here. While you work on your papers, I will make space for your stuff.' she smiled faintly. Her oom was big and a bit empty. So when Saito would be here permanently... her room... would be their room and filled up.

"You shouldn't have to do it on your own."

She sat next to him. ' ' Of course I do... I invited you. And since you are my lover... I want to spoil you a bit.' ' she smiled.

"Then you should know that I feel the same about you."

She flushed at his answer but kept smiling. It was quiet indeed, aside from the nightly visitor hooting in occasionally.

"So... can I help you?"

' Yes. You can make space for your clothing in the closet.' she smiled.

He nodded and set his papers on the desk and went to make a space, he didn't take much space, so there should be no problems. Kiyomi rolled out her futon. Hijikata had gave her an extra large one when she received her own room. She placed on a spot so she could put her folding screen in the front of it.

' This way, they can't look right away were we...sleeping and ...you know... '

He laughed quietly in amusement as he made a small space for himself.  
"I see what you're thinking."

Her face flushed red and looked away. ' ' W-what I am...t-thinking then?' she asked.

He finished clearing out the small space for himself and glanced over at her, merely smiling.

' Kiyomi! Your fresh clothes are here!' called her mother. She look at him and went out to get it. When she saw also Saito's clothes... She took them with her and brought it back. ' Your clothes as well...'

He paused a moment and glanced over at the door.

' She didn't see...' she said and gave him his clean clothing. ' No one knows... that you are with me... here...' she said.

"You don't think your mother would be unhappy?"

' She won't. She accepted it like my father.' she said. ' You belong now to the family.' she smiled. ' So you have a brother as well...'

"I see. It had seemed at first she wasn't particularly pleased."

' ' In the beginning... she had very mixed feelings but when she saw me... how happy I was and you were with me... she accept it...' ' she smiled faintly.

"Hmmm. Though it is understandable... this kind of thing... people don't seem to be entirely too pleased about."

' ' Because you saw me grow up. But our age different is almost the same of my parents... I love you a lot and you me. That is what counts.' '

"Yes, because most of the soldiers believe something between us started much... earlier..."

' ' That's not true, we know the true and my father does as well.' ' she said and suddenly she giggled. ' ' The look on the face of the messenger when you stepped behind me...' '

"Ah... that probably wasn't such a good idea in hindsight... except... I became irrationally jealous because he was looking at you..." When she heard that she flushed softly and lay her head on his chest and her arms around his waist. He sighed very quietly and set a hand on her back. "I honestly never thought about it before."

She sighs softly. ' ' If you knew... how long I loved you... for three years... when I was fourteen... I have admired you, loved you and longed to be in your arms...' '

"Is that so?" He pondered it for a moment, yes, he was busy with duty and may not have noticed, but thought rather it had been just a childish crush that would go away with time.

' ' Yes. that the day has come... that my silent prayers came true... I never ever been so happy then now...' '

"Prayers hm? Perhaps that's it... the only thing that made an impossible thing possible..."

She look up and smiled to him. ' ' I prayed everyday to be with you.' '

"I'm sorry that you suffered for that time."

' ' You suffered longer... all alone...' ' she said with a soft tone and put her nose on his. ' ' I wanted to be with you...so much... that my chest was hurting...' '

He pulled her closer. She placed her lips on his cheek while a single tear fell down. He understood her... The man she had loved from far away... The man that came back with bloodstains on his clothes after a fight and couldn't comfort... the man from who she wanted to see her as a woman...and as a lover... was finally in her arms.

"This time I get to come home to you... so I'll make up for the times that you've suffered alone."

' ' Hajime...' ' she said softly happy and tighten her arms around him.



"I love you... and I love the thought that I get to come home to you every night..."

' ' And I will wait for you, here with open arms... because I love you. ' '

"I know you would."

She snuggled closer against him, inhaling his scent. He rested his chin on her head, watching the wall quietly.

' ' How much you need to finish?

"Of my reports?"

' ' Yes... ' '

"I have to report for the patrol and also Aizu..."

' ' And after that? ' ' she asked.

"After that... just stay with you..."

' ' I like that idea... Then I will remain next to your side and read a book. ' ' she smiled.

"I'll get to those reports then..." If he finished them early he had more time with her, at least until tomorrow.

' ' alright ' ' she said and picked a book out to read

Later that night Yamazaki rode up in a hurry with a message.  
"Quickly! I need to speak with Kondo!"

Hijikata stepped out. ' ' What's going on? ' '

"The new government forces have put out a bounty on anyone wearing a Shinsengumi uniform. It seems that wearing our cloaks have scared their soldiers to the point of not wanting to fight here."

' ' Really... ' ' he said.

"Yes. Their men refuse to travel here, saying this island is cursed by demons."

Hijikata sighs. Kondo came and heard the conversation.

' ' But... they should be happy to know that the Shinsengumi are killing the demons. ' ' he said.

' ' That is not the point, Kondo-san. ' ' said Hijikata. ' ' Travelers have been talking about the feral demons and we are patrolling and stopping them... but I think someone has given wrong information as well, to give us a black name. ' '

"Either way, the government forces are too afraid to come here." Yamazaki informed, handing them a bounty letter, showing the big price that was on the shoulders of the Shinsengumi.

' ' Damn... ' ' said Hijikata. If the new government's men were too

afraid of curses, then they couldn't send more men to fight. The war would finally end here.

"Shall I inform the rest of the captains?"

' ' Yes please.' ' said Hijikata and sighs.

Yamazaki quickly headed off to inform the rest of the captains.

' ' Toshi... does it mean we are done?' ' asked Kondo. ' ' Maybe with the war... but patrolling, we always need to...and we still need to find Kodo as well.' '

It seemed this information caused a stir amongst the captains, as Yamazaki informed all of them. Kondo and Hijikata were waiting in the main room so they could talk about it. Yamazaki finally got to Saito's room and knocked, except... he wasn't getting an answer.

Sanosuke and Heisuke strolled in the room, yawning but still they want to know more about it. Yamazaki waited as long as he could, before opening the door, except still no Saito. He assumed he was on a patrol and returned to the main room.

Everyone was at the main room. Hijikata was looking around. He knew Inoue and Shimida had night patrol. Mamoru yawned and sat next to his dad. Kosuzu sat next to Souji and Chizuru and Osen next to each other.

' ' I am missing...Saaaaaaaaaito...' ' yawned Mamoru.

"I believe he is on patrol, he was not in his room." Yamazaki answered.

' ' Patrol? Inoue and Shimida are on patrol.' ' said Kondo.

"Is that so? Well I'm afraid he wasn't there. I have no clue where he could be-..." and then it hit him, Yamazaki recalled hearing the rumors during his spying missions.

' ' what is it, Yamazaki?' ' asked Hijikata.

"I just thought... he may be off somewhere with... someone."

Hijikata looked at him and had a feeling...

' ' Maybe he is drinking somewhere. Sometimes Saito loves to drink on his own.' ' said Heisuke.

' ' But we need Kiyomi here as well. After all, she wears the blue sleeves.' ' said Sanosuke.

Yamazaki gave a face that clearly said he had no desire to walk in on something.

' ' Let her sleep.' ' said Kondo.

' ' I will get them.' ' said Kosuzu and stood up.

Yamazaki had not been around for some time, busy on the mainland gathering intel, he had not the slightest idea what he was about to learn here. Souji merely smiled in his corner where he sat.

' ' Don't tell me...?' ' asked Chizuru.

' ' I have no idea...' ' answered Hijikata.

Kosuzu stopped at the door of Kiyomi. Kiyomi was sleeping against Hajime. Saito curiously glanced at the book she had been reading, wondering what it was.

Kosuzu knocked on the door. ' ' Kiyomi?'

In reaching for the book he paused and frowned. Yes, it seemed that there was no way for them to have time to just themselves.

' ' Kiyomi, are you there?' ' called Kosuzu. He glanced over at the door with an unhappy look, lightly setting a hand on her shoulder. She would have to answer it. She woke up and look at Saito, then she heard Kosuzu. She stood up and open the door. ' ' Your father has requested you to a very important meeting. Things are changing. Do you know were Saito is? He needs to attend as well.'

he would have been happy to get up for her, but he wasn't sure if she wanted people to know that he was staying with her or not.

' ' Hajime, we need to attend.' ' said Kiyomi softly. Kosuzu excused herself and walked away.

He grabbed his jacket to put on, if he were attending his meeting he had to look his best. Kiyomi put her haori over her sleeping kimono. Kosuzu came in the main room and sat next to Souji.

"Anything interesting to tell me?" Souji asked, looking most interested.

' ' Like what? Both were in her room but they didn't do a thing. Kiyomi was sleeping and it seems Saito was reading.' ' said Kosuzu.

"Nothing?" Souji pouted and crossed his arms. "Wait, what was he reading?"

' ' I have no idea. But since he was in Kiyomi's room not anything... naked.' ' she smirked. ' ' But it could be a romance novel...' '

"Ohhhhh..." Souji set a hand on his chin. "So it's that kind of thing... Hajime-kun, Hajime-kun... what a perv."

Kiyomi walked with Saito behind her and she sat on her spot. She rubbed in her eyes. ' ' Sorry to wake you up but this is evry important.' ' said Kondo... also still no clue about the thing between Saito and Kiyomi.

' ' We are all gathered now. So the news is, it seems the army of the new government is scared for the island... hearing about the stories of the demons.' ' said Hijikata.

' ' Why not telling them-...nrgh...' groaned Kiyomi suddenly as her hand went to her throat. It started to get dry... but she relaxed to suppress it. ' '... Why not telling...the people... we are protecting them?'

Saito glanced at her and frowned deeply. Kiyomi didn't get it... why she was getting thirsty all of sudden? Then it hit her... It was full moon and it was the day he was on his highest point. That night she became always thirsty, if she had feed her self by her parents or not. Saito briefly glanced at his injury, coming to his own ideas that it was probably his fault.

' ' Kiyomi, it's the day that the moon is on his highest point, you need to drink.' ' he said.

Saito looked a bit confused at hearing that. Was that the reason the feral demons were causing so much trouble lately? Kiyomi bent over. Mamoru looked worried, he didn't had trouble at all like the other ones but she had.

Kiyomi huffed softly, it was hurting now. Saito grabbed her by the shoulder and pulled her towards him, heading out of the room. "Vice Commander please excuse our absence for a moment."

' ' Sure.' ' he said.

' ' Is that a good idea?' ' asked Mamoru. ' ' I mean, she feed at you and mom.' ' he said.

' ' Right now, she will only accept it from Hajime.' ' said Hijikata.

' ' nnrghh...' groaned Kiyomi, it was hurting so much. He pulled her into the closest empty room and started to remove his jacket.

"Just hurry up and take what you need from me." He didn't like seeing her in pain, so he had acted out of his ordinary self in front of people. She looked at him before she transformed and bit him in his neck hard and deep and start to drink. How it felt nice to taste the red liquid on her tongue.

' ' You mean in demon-term, they mated?' ' asked Osen and Sanosuke and Heisuke were now wide awake.

' ' M-m-mated? B-b-but...' said Kondo.

Yamazaki looked shocked and straightened up, clearing his throat. "... anyway... I had guessed something was going on from the rumors I kept hearing..."

' ' Rumors?' ' asked Hijikata.

"... ahhhh..." Yamazaki realized he just got himself into quite a bind. "I shouldn't have said anything." He added quickly.

' ' What kind of rumors?' ' asked Hijikata with a voice.. that everyone knew; don't mess with the Demon Vice Commander.

"... well..." Yamazaki fidgeted. "Vice Commander the rumors are... not... in my words mind you... that Saito... 'couldn't have Hijikata

so he screwed the next best thing' and also... that Saito and your daughter have been in a relationship from... a very young age..."

' WHAT?! Who is spreading those?' he growled and looked furious. '' At a young age... Mamoru and Kiyomi were under the wings of every captain here! I know it is weird that they are together now but it happened this year and not when she was young! ''

Mamoru, who heard the stories about his father was ... impressed. Indeed he honored that nickname.

"Some of the men are spreading the rumors... I don't know where they originated."

' Tomorrow... I want tomorrow everyone in the dojo!' gritted Hijikata his teeth. '' They will hear it from me... and they should leave them alone.''

"Vice Commander... either way... it... isn't unusual for a man to take on a young girl... so at least in that... you have no worries with Aizu."

' I just want to talk to our man! I know that every man here... had an eye on her. That she chose someone doesn't mean they can act out of jealousy and spread words to disgrace a captain!''

"Yes, of course not. I only meant it wasn't usual for a man to do so..." Yamazaki, though, wasn't saying he didn't believe the rumors, in fact he also faintly suspected Saito.

' So...this is...how you think...about me... the little snake that seduces a captain...' said Kiyomi softly at the opening from the door, she glared like her father and made a ball of her fist. '' Is that it? Because they couldn't get me? They want to hurt the man I love more than my own life?''

"... the rumors aren't about you... only of Saito... you have no worries..." Yamazaki stated, though Saito didn't seem to care and set a hand on her shoulder.

"It's fine, don't worry over meaningless rumors."

She look at him. '' They...they will come after you... I can't see you in pain... I can't. Yamazaki!' she said... and right away in the tone her father always used. '' I will be damn clear to you. We started to go out around a few months ago... before that, nothing happened. Am I clear to you?''

Yamazaki merely looked down and Saito sighed. "It's true, as Yamazaki said, to take on a young girl, there are no laws against it, so even if they do believe that, nothing will come of the rumors."

' But...what we have ... is so pure... I don't want it to get stained...' she said while she look at Saito with sad eyes. '' Our loves reach farther than the stars itself...''

' You know... I believe you two.' said Sanosuke. Hijikata gave a small sigh if being relieved.

"Even if I had accepted you when you were younger doesn't make it

dirty, because I wouldn't have touched you until you were mature enough to handle it." He assured and Yamazaki, took note of that. She lay her head on his chest and sighs.

' ' You are born too pretty, sis.' ' smirked Mamoru.

' ' Shut up, monkey.' ' she mumbles and Mamoru laughed.

"In anycase... we need to focus on the issues at hand..." Saito added to change the subject. Souji leaned his chin on his hand and stared at the two of them, slowly grinning. He hadn't even needed to say anything to embarrass them, Yamazaki mistakenly did so.

' ' So... you two tied the knot or do I need to say... something else?' ' giggled Osen.

"Well... they must have been studying moves from that book that Kosuzu said they were reading." Souji decided to throw in.

' ' It was a book about how to make a kimono.' ' said Kiyomi and she look at Osen. ' ' Aunt Osen... please stop it or I tell uncle Kazama.' '

"Pft, Kazama is afraid of her." Souji leaned back. "You sure it wasn't something pervy?"

Saito raised a brow, because really he didn't know, he hadn't really looked.

' ' Uncle Souji, your brains are at the wrong place.' ' said Kiyomi.

"Or... in the right place."

She hide her face in Saito's chest. ' ' Souji...enough.' ' said Hijikata.

"What's the matter? Did I embarrass you?" That made Souji all the more happy, while Saito averted his eyes, if he tried to stop him it would make it worse, but the thought of it being that kind of book... or more or less the thought of her reading the kind of book.

"Hm. If that is all... Vice Commander is the meeting finished?"

' ' Yes. It is. We need our rest for the duties tomorrow.' ' said Hijikata.

"Then we'll take our leave... Souji..." Saito glanced at him with a glare that could scare anyone... except Souji who wanted to see that kind of look so he knew he hit the right spot to tease.

' ' Everyone is dismissed.' ' said Hijikata and stood up. The others went to their room.

Kiyomi walked quietly next to Saito and put her hand in his,

"Don't worry about Souji... he enjoys assuming things." Saito said quietly, glancing at her.

She lay her head on his arm while walking. ' ' You are dear to me...

when they talk about it... it sounds like we have something cheap... while it isn't.'

"Still, you can't worry about what they think, because some people only believe what they feel like... and Souji... he understands, he just pretends."

' ' Alright. I believe you.' ' she said and opened the door from her room. ' ' Sorry that I bit you so hard... ' '

"It's fine. Aside from that... Souji knows you wouldn't really read that kind of thing." He added, that just... wasn't possible. She picked up her book and showed the kimono patterns. "Ah. Nothing like what he puts under my futon."

' ' I want the futon under me... with you in my arms.' ' she said.

"That kind of thing... maybe you do have one hidden around somewhere..." He smiled to show he was only joking. At least he wasn't merciless in his jokes like Souji.

' ' Yea..right.' ' she smiled as well. ' ' I don't need a guide to discover your body...' ' she confessed softly.

"No... you certainly don't... you know exactly how to kill me as it is..."

' ' Is that so?' ' she asked him with a small smirk. ' ' Well, it goes the same for you.' ' '

"Hmmm..." Well... he would be lying if he said he didn't know what to do because of those books, he had ever so briefly gone through them occasionally.

' ' Are you done with your reports?' ' she asked.

"Yes."

' ' So...you are going to sleep with me?' ' she said as she put her haori off from her sleeping kimono.

"I thought we already established that." There were certain things though from that book, that he didn't feel he should do with her. It would all probably be uncomfortable.

She took his sleeping kimono from the closet and walked to him. ' ' Just wanted to say it... Knowing you will be with me every night.' ' '

"It makes you happy?" Though, he didn't need to ask, he knew.

She kissed him on his lips. ' ' Does this answer your question?' ' '

"It might... I'm still not sure."

She dropped his kimono and put her arms around his neck and kissed him again but longer now. He smiled into it and pulled her into him abruptly.

She smiled as well when she was closer to him. '' Do ...I need ...to help... you... with changing... your clothes...'' she asked while she kissed him.

"How do you... expect to go about doing that?" He questioned.

'' removing your jacket first...'' she said while she removed his jacket.

"Hmmm..." He brushed a hand over her cheek and pressed his lips along her neck to distract her.

''... Ah...'' escaped her lips when she felt his lips on her skin.

"Are you sure... that you... can... manage...?"

'' Managing...what?''

"Ahh, I didn't think so... to continue what you were just doing."

Her hand went over his chest and unbutton slowly his shirt until the last one and put his blouse off and kissed his chest. He leaned his head back and sighed. It relaxed him to be at ease here with her. She kept kissing his chest while her hands were touching his abdomen and slowly down and undid his pants as well. She hugged him and placed kisses on his shoulder and neck, very careful and gentle.

"Might want to get more comfortable."

'' Want to lay down?''

"Mhm..." Except he didn't move and continued kissing her wherever he pleased. She walked slowly backwards, taking him with her to the futon and pulled him down with her so the lay on the futon. "What do you want to do?" He asked, just making sure he wasn't mistaking things.

'' Open my kimono... and love me...''

He reached down and untied it, though even now he was still slow. She felt how he was taking his time and relaxed. She loved that from him, taking time... He moved and winced suddenly, lowering his face at the same time to hide the expression, he didn't want her to know he was hurt, but he felt a pull at his injury.

'' Your wound,...are you alright?'' she asked.

"Fine..."

She touched his face. '' What about you lay down...so I can spoil you...''

"You shouldn't have to."

'' I want...to kiss... every spot... on your body... so it will remember how much I love you.''

"I think I'll have no trouble remembering... it's just that I'm not



giving you a choice... so it doesn't seem fair."

' ' And why is that?'

"I... well... that... I... I don't know..."

' ' Or is...it... you want to spoil me only?'

"In a way... yes. Something along those lines."

' ' Something? Now you are making me curious.' ' she said with a soft smile as she put her kimono aside and pulled Saito to her and lay his head on her shoulder and hold him. He rested there, not bothering to move. She stroke softly his hair. It was so quiet... and indeed sometimes the owl made a sound... and you could hear crickets but it was peaceful. For a moment, he was relatively sure he could just fall asleep like that. Kiyomi found with her other hand the blanket and pulled it over them and snuggled him closer to her. She pressed a kiss on his hair.

"It will be winter soon." He stated quietly. "It gets so cold here... I think we'll be spending a lot of time together here."

' ' Yes...' ' she said softly while stroking his back. ' ' For sure we need extra blankets...' '

"Maybe..."

' ' Or you could be my blanket.' ' she joked softly

"I wouldn't mind."

She snuggled her nose in his hair and she placed her hand on his bandage. ' ' Does it still hurt?'

"No. It isn't a serious thing."

In the distance, Kiyomi heard her brother calling Souji to knock it off. ' ' Good thing we are sleeping here now.' '

"I could not possibly agree more."

' ' Yes, and... my room is the only one.. who has two thick walls...' ' she smiled.

"Is that so?"

' ' Yes. So... it will be maybe a bit warmer here with the winter.' '

"I'll make sure you're warm." He replied, setting a hand on her back and massaging the area lightly. "If the snow piles up this year again... we might be stuck here for a time..."

she inhaled slightly deep. ' ' I don't mind to be stuck with you...' '

"We would be stuck for some time..."

' ' What are you trying to tell me...hmmmm?'

"Just warning you ahead of time... that you're going to be stuck with me for days on end..."

She lift his head up and kissed him softly. '' I really don't mind... because I would have all of you to my own. ''

"I hope that it happens."

She look at the mark she gave him when she was thirsty and placed a kiss on it. It was strange, that he hoped his duties were interrupted simply for her sake. That wasn't something he normally felt. She knew that the winters wouldn't be cold and lonely anymore. He would stay with her and she with him. She had really manage to make a mess of his head, he couldn't even believe his own words surprisingly enough.

'' Hajime... I can say thousand times I love you... it wouldn't be enough... ''

"I feel the same way."

She rolled him gentle on his good side and stared at his blue eyes while she touched his cheek. He had been holding off for some time, but by now he'd be lying if he said he wasn't thirsty.

'' What is it... itoshii? '' she asked softly.

"Nothing..."

She knew the look he had in his eyes... She bit on her lip and a small drop of blood showed up.

"you're doing it on purpose..."

'' Because I know you won't drink from me even if I ask you to do so... '' He leaned into her and licked the blood from her lips, there was no use in wasting it then... '' Take what you need... '' she whispers. He sighed quietly, '' What a deep sigh... ''

He turned into her neck, not bothering to answer, but still hesitating in drawing blood.

'' Drink Hajime... I can't see you in pain... '' Her lips caressed his cheek softly...in a caring way... and stroke with her fingers his other cheek. So soft...and slow...

"I love you..."

'' I love you too... '' she said and kissed him deeper then normal but still careful. There was a thought in his mind, he had never been so sure as he was right now, but now... wasn't the time to say it. He wanted to wait for the perfect time to present the idea. She put her arms around his neck and pulled him closer. She never thought she could love someone so much and yet... she did. So long as he made it through this war then he would ask. He made up his mind.

'' Let's catch Kodo soon... and clear this island of the feral demons... ''

"Yes..." Although part of him wasn't sure what he would do without war.

' ' Then... we can live in peace... and do stuff now like we do always... helping people.'

"I don't know... how to live any other way..."

' ' I can see you as kendo teacher...' she smiled. ' ' And i will be your assistant.'

"A teacher?"

' ' Yes... how to use a sword and why. What the life lessons will be and why a sword is the soul of a samurai.'

"And... What if I'm not good at anything other than killing?"

' ' You've got a lot of good points... Maybe you don't see them... but I do... and the others as well.' she smiled.

"I don't know how to be anything else..."

' ' I will help you.' she smiled and kissed him. ' ' I will help you...I promise.' He tightly hugged her close to him. ' ' You will be never alone again... I will stay always with you... in good and bad times.'

"I know that you will." She kissed his neck sensual... small kisses... but loving. "If you do that..."

' '.hmmmm...' she answered in soft moan, to fixated on his skin. He breathed out slowly, he just had to relax. He couldn't do too much right now or else he would have to wait longer for the injury to heal. ' ' Hajime... please... tell me...what you want...' she asked him while she stared at him with a look... that told more then a few words. It was a look of unconditional love.

"I'm not sure..." even if it sounded strange it was true.

' ' You've got enough time to think about it.' she smiled and lay against his shoulder. ' ' Hajime... I know you don't want to... but please...drink a bit... I...I felt your pain when I was drinking yours... If you drink, it will heal faster...'

"I..." He sighed, one would think a samurai would have no trouble, but he didn't want to draw blood from her, it bothered him.

' ' You... don't want to...harm me?' she said softly. He nodded slowly. She went with her hand under her futon and took a kunai knife out of it. " " If you don't want to hurt me... I will do it myself. I won't let hurt my lover because he can't hurt me.' she said and slid her tight open so that red liquid streamed out.

He gritted his teeth, fighting it for a moment, but he gave in and leaned in to lick up the blood. He wasn't sure if he was supposed to be happy about getting blood or upset she had to be hurt to give it to him. Or the craving itself... She placed her hands on his back and buried her face in his hair and pressed small kisses on it. If it was preferable, he completely gave into it. There was no reason for her

to suffer any more. She held him like this, giving him butterfly kisses and sweet whispers while he was drinking. It did seem though, that the blood was easing the sting that he felt in his side. He would feel how much she loves him, how she want to love him... He would know that he was the perfect lover for her.

He reached down and pulled the stitches out, finding no reason for them... this was helping him he could tell. She saw what he was doing and kept stroking through his hair. He hoped that with this extra boost and the half demon blood already in him would heal him by tomorrow. It made her happy to see him drink like this. Now she knew he would get better by tomorrow. He pulled her even closer, this was what he was afraid of, becoming so addicted he didn't know if he could stop.

' ' Your tongue...' ' she groaned softly.

Instead of answering or saying something he tightened his grip on her. She caressed his back slowly and in a pattern. She couldn't get enough of him... Somehow... he just couldn't understand how she was fine with him leeching off her, even if she loved him, didn't it bother her?

' ' Hajime...' ' she said and placed his hand on her chest, her heart beating fast. ' ' I love you so much...' '

He glanced up at her. ' ' ... so much...' ' she said and a tear rolled down. ' ' ... I want to love you more and more... but I don't know how... ' '

He brought his hand up and brushed it from her cheek, frowning faintly. She leaned in his touch and closed her eyes. Her feelings for him are so overwhelming...

"What should I do?" He couldn't understand a woman's emotions. Had he made her cry?

' ' My feelings for you... are overwhelming me... that it made me...shed a tear... Hajime... hold me... kiss me... Just...just never let me go.' ' she said with a passionate voice.

"I won't let you go." He assured. He had absolutely no intention of doing that.

She hold him tighter. ' ' I am so glad that I found you.' '

"Found? I was there since the beginning."

She laughed softly. ' ' yea I know. But can you understand between all those men, I found you? That I saw a man that touched my heart.' '

"In that case... I'm the lucky one."

' ' Very lucky indeed.' ' she said. ' ' If I think back... I... still got something from you.' '

"Hm?"

' ' Once you brought some sweets for me and Mamoru. My brothers was

still neat in a wooden box but mine were wrapped in your handkerchief because they were out of boxes. I still got your handkerchief.' she smiled.

"Ah... that..."

' Sorry I kept it...but when I had a bad dream, I slept with it.' she said and lay her against his. '... I embarrassed myself...' she giggled softly with flushed cheeks.

"It's fine... actually... it makes me feel... glad."

' Glad?' she asked softly.

"yes... that someone needs me."

' I will always need you...' she said softly and lay on her back and stretched herself out. He glanced away from her, it was too tempting to look. ' You saw it before...' she said softly. She put her hands above her head, her black hair spread out like a blanket. Her purple eyes looking at him. ' Did you had enough blood from me or do you need more?'

He watched her wearily and sighed quietly. Well... there was no point in answering his mind was drawing blanks. She open her arms. ' Come in my arms.' she asked softly.

He set a hand on either side of her. "You're dangerous..."

' Am I...' she said softly.

"Very."

Her hands rested on his waist when she moved up slowly on his sides.

>She look at him while he hung above her. ' You are so handsome... such a perfect sight...'<p>

"Hmm, I'm surprised. Everyone always said differently."

' Because they don't look further then they should be...'

"I recall one particular man, that used to say I had a face only a mother could love."

' Well, was he damn wrong.' she smiled. ' It's past... because I am here with you.'

He licked his lips slowly, still faintly able to taste the remainders of blood. Her fingers traced slowly over his lips. He grabbed her wrist and pressed a kiss to her palm, keeping his eyes on hers. Her fingers stroke against his skin when she kept staring at him... He placed another kiss lower on her inner wrist. She inhaled and closed her eyes. His kisses...were enchanting her. He released her and dropped his hand to her side, leaning closer to her. She open her eyes half and parted her lips open so you could hear how she was breathing. Letting out a deep breath he pressed his lips along her neck and trailed his hand over her side lightly. She let out a sigh, a normal one... not the suppressed ones at their first time. He reached down and pulled the blankets up around them, that might be

frustrating later, but for now...

' ' How...cozy...' ' she whispers.

"Hmmm..." He found she said it in a strange way and wondered what it meant.

' ' The blanket... around...us...' ' she said while she kissed softly his neck. he doubted he needed to warn her anymore what would happen if she kept doing that, she knew and she knew it very well. She lay her head against his chest and was listening to his heart beating. She loved the sound of it...

"Let's rest... we need to wake early tomorrow for our duties..."

She nodded and snuggled very close against him. He decided against his thoughts and that it was better to rest. She fell asleep with a small smile in his arms. After she fell asleep he watched for for a short while, before also falling asleep himself. It was a quiet night since Kiyomi's room had a quiet spot.

It was early in the morning as the first birds started to whistle. Maybe that a few soldiers were awake and nothing more. Kiyomi turned around in her sleep and put an arm around Saito. Saito awoke, briefly glancing at her, he wanted to stay, but he needed to get up and leave on patrol. She tighten her grip around him, like she was feeling he needed to get up.

He sighed quietly. "I need to go and train my men... so you'll have to let go."

She opened her eyes and yawned. She kissed him. ' ' Be careful, Hajime.' '

"I will."

' ' Today I will go with Mamoru to collect herbs for mother.' '

"I see. Well... I hope that you have fun." He said quietly, getting up and securing his uniform in perfect order and adjusted perfectly, not a hair out of place. Once it was finished he gathered up his reports and headed out, with some regret. It was a shame that he needed to leave so soon.

That was when he noticed Kazama approaching him with a letter. "Mutt, you've got an order from Aizu..."

Saito looked on in surprise and took that letter, opening it and reading it over, but his expression turned to one of shock as he read the letter. "This is..."

"Yes. It is your decision if you want to go on the journey."

"I... need to think... I'll have my answer tonight."

He gathered up his men and they patrolled for some long time, and when their patrol was finally up he sent his men off and settled down in the nearest bar to have a drink and think things over, because he knew he couldn't very well deny a request for duty from Aizu.

Since she need to make medicines for the upcoming winter Kiyomi was away with Mamoru in the forest to find herbs for their mother.

' I don't get it... this is a woman task.' said Mamoru.

' Mother and Aunt Osen are cooking and...Kosuzu is with Souji... so you don't want to disturb them.' said Kiyomi.

' Like you are with Saito...' said Mamoru.

' We not really like them, Mamoru. They do it every night... Souji and Kosuzu. Hajime and I...are more... I don't know how to explain it...but...we don't need that to show our love for each other...'

' I see. I am glad. Kiyomi, did you knew? Uncle Kondo and dad decided... I will be promoted officially to be captain our birthday.' he smiled and she smiled as well.

' Well done. So your dream comes true.' she said.

' Yes, I will finally get like everyone else the official cloak. I am honored.' said Mamoru. They came back from farming and Kiyomi decided to take a walk through the town. People knew her and always asked her for help if they needed. And right now, near the bar were Saito was, children were playing outside. A little boy fell down and cried.

Kiyomi bend through her knees and put the little boy on her lap. " let me clean your knee. You fell hard. Be careful the next time." she said gentle. until she saw Saito stepping outside. " Hajime?" she called him.

"What are you doing in this sort of place?"

' Hey honey, why getting this guy when you can have me?' asked a man and put his hand on her shoulder.

She faced him and gave him a death glare. " Get that hand off me..." She slapped the hand of the guy off and Saito also gave a glare to the man in warning.

"Let's leave... this isn't a good place to be. I don't want to have to kill someone." It was a clear threat to the man for daring to touch her and the man no doubt looked offended, but valued his life too much to mess with that familiar blue cloak.

He sighed unhappily that she was out here alone again. It was too dangerous.

She look at him and smiled. " Let's go home." They walked back together. Osen was happy that Kazama was back. Kiyomi smiled, her aunt was then brightly, more then usual. " Hajime... you only drink a lot if there is something wrong so whats going on?"

"There's nothing. I just felt like relaxing."

' Alright.' she said softly. She sat down and picked up her pen and was writing.

"I'm going to go clean up..."

' ' Ok. I will be here, waiting for your return.' ' she said with a faint smile.

He headed out without another when, deciding he would just have to sleep on it. He just wasn't sure how he was going to bring up this mission to her, or to anyone else, it was going to be very difficult. He washed up, getting the remainders of drink off of himself and any dirt from patrol, but he stopped and sat down, staring at his reflection in the water. There was no other choice about it, he had to go. It wasn't technically breaking his promise if he was going to return right?

' ' Hajime, you are late up.' ' said a voice. It was Hijikata.

"Yes, I was preparing for bed." He answered, watching the water that dripped from his hair fall into the bucket and cause a ripple that spread outwards, shaking his reflection.

' ' I see. Sleep well then and dry your hair off,' ' he said putting a towel on his head and drying it.

"I don't think I'll get much sleep. There's a lot to think about."

' ' Want to talk with me? Maybe I can give you advice.' '

"I was thinking about it... for awhile now... before..." He went silent a moment. "I... w-well I... want to marry your daughter. I want... your permission for it first... but also... I have a mission... I need to go on..."

' ' A mission for Aizu?' ' asked Hijikata softly.

"Yes. To go to the mainland as a spy."

' ' For how long?' '

"Unknown."

Hijikata was silent for awhile. ' ' It's really hard but... we own Aizu a debt for the fact that they took care of us. But I see the problem, you dont want to part with Kiyomi.' '

"I also made you a promise I wouldn't leave... and her as well... I don't want to break a promise... I never have, but now..."

' ' I... want you to be here... I love you like you are my son and indeed we made the promise but... It's thanks to Aizu, we are here...and that... you and Kiyomi are together. That we are safe.' ' said Hijikata and sighs. ' ' You have my permission to go... on one condition, promise me you do return.' '

"I'll come back." But still it was hard to break a promise, when a man was only as good as his word.

' ' Because you love my daughter...' ' he said. ' ' That's why... I give you my blessing to marry her.' '

He looked shocked and nodded. "I... I'll definitely live up to



it."

Hijikata hug him. '' That's good, ...son. ''

Nearby Souji discreetly leaned on a wall, having heard everything.

'' But it will be hard on her when you tell her...'' he said.

"I know... that's why I haven't."

'' You should. You just can't leave... She will be heartbroken...''

"No, I wouldn't just leave." He replied, but still he didn't know how to say it.

'' There is no right moment to tell, just...tell it... even it is hard. ''

"Tomorrow then..."

'' Alright. go to her, she is probably waiting for you. ''

Saito gathered himself for a moment before he decided to head back and once he was gone Souji let out some applauds.

"Well well... seems like he's abandoning us."

'' He is not...Souji. '' said Hijikata.

"Are you really going to let the Aizu take him to the mainland?"

'' It's thanks to them...we have a safe place above our head. I really don't like it either. I prefer more that he stays here and have a good life with everyone like always. ''

Souji made a sound, he wasn't one that cared for the Aizu, he only really cared to follow Kondo. "Well... I hope he does fine. He gets seasick."

'' I know. Kondo-san was happy that everything went well. He said the Shinsengumi became important to Aizu since we did good work. '' said Hijikata and stood up. '' We got a place with all of us. Which make it nice to take care... of each other children. '' said Hijikata with a teasing smirk to Souji.

"Easy there, we don't know anything yet." Souji seemed pleased none the less. "But maybe soon."

'' Come on, you do it everyday. '' said Hijikata with a chuckle. '' Or are you that terrible? '' he joked after it.

"Me? Get real already. I haven't been putting much effort into it yet."

Just then it seemed a messenger rode up.

'' What is it what you need? '' asked Hijikata.

"A letter for the third division captain. It seems it's from the mainland."

' ' I see. I will give it to him.' ' said Hijikata.

The messenger handed the letter out, but Souji noticing the wrong last name snatched it and turned around with it. "Hmm, what do we have here?"

' ' Souji, that is for Hajime.' ' said Hijikata.

Regardless Souji opened it up and started reading, but his expression changed suddenly. "...Oh..."

' ' What...?'

It was a rare expression for Souji to look upset in this way. "Hajime-kun's sister... is..." He didn't think he needed to finish that sentence and handed the letter off to Hijikata.

Hijikata was reading it. ' ' she deceased?' ' he said. ' ' I.. will go tell him' ' said Hijikata and turned around.

Saito had just returned to the room and glanced around, seemed quiet enough, had she fallen asleep?

She rolled on her back when she heard him. ' ' Welcome back...' ' Instead of speaking he slowly approached her, kneeling near her and leaning his head on her chest. ' ' Hey what's going-..' ' but then there was a knock and Hijikata's voice. ' ' Hajime... I...I have news...about your...sister.' '

He abruptly straightened up and went to get the door, opening it, he noticed the letter. "Opened?" He took the letter suddenly, without bothering to ask, that tone terrified him and he read it over. "No... no..."

Kiyomi stood up..' ' Hajime?' ' she said. Hijikata look at him and stood behind him. ' ' I am...sorry for your loss.' ' he said softly and put a hand lightly on his shoulder.

"She died in childbirth-wha...that's a lie..." He set a hand on his head and he lost the strength to stand and collapsed. Hijikata just caught him just in time. Kiyomi went quickly out the room to get water and returned to place a towel on Saito's head, but he pushed her hand away and sat up, but Hijikata was there to stop him from going too far.

"How can I be the only one left...? It should be me... it should have been only me." He chose to be a warrior with the high chance of death and yet it was his family that died from such simple means?

Suddenly water drops fell on Saito's face. Kiyomi was crying. ' ' I don't know... how it feels but please...don't say you should be dead.' '

"This is all the more reason I have to go there..." He pulled Aizu's orders from inside his jacket and handed them to her. "I know you'll be upset, but I have to go there either way. I have to leave for a mission."

She was reading the letter and silently, more tears fell down. '' I see... but after the mission, you will return right?''

"I'll come home to you." He reached up and brushed away the tears

'' I will leave, so you two are alone.'' said Hijikata and stood up.  
'' Be strong, Hajime and show the strength you have.'' he said proudly .

"Even though I'll be gone a long time... I'll definitely... come home to you."

Hijikata left the room and closed the door. Kiyomi sniffed. '' I will wait...I will always wait...' ' she said and lean forward to press her lips on his.

"I wanted to tell you differently... but... this is just how it has to be." He said quietly, hugging her to him. He wanted to make his proposal, but... if he died, he didn't want that on her mind... so when he came home... if he came home... he would make that proposal to her.

'' Hajime...' ' she said and tears were welling up again. '' I love you so much...' '

"I know... I love you too."

'' When...are you going to leave?''

"Tomorrow."

She snuggled close against him, '' Then please for tonight, don't leave my side.''

"I won't." He promised. She kissed his cheeks, his jawline and his lips... "I thought you would be angry with me..."

'' You are doing your job... I am only very sad, knowing you will be gone for some times.''

"I don't want you to be sad."

She dried her face. '' Sorry... but just... when we could be... in each other arms every night...' '

"I know..." He pressed a kiss to the top of her head and then buried his nose in her hair. He was really in distress over this, first off being drunk, finding he had to break a promise, finding his sister died in childbirth with his nephew or niece. this was the most difficult thing he had ever done.

'' May your sister rest in peace...' ' she said softly.

"Let's just get some sleep... I can't... think... right now..."

She nodded and pulled him so close as possible against her and snuggled her face in his chest. He slowly closed his eyes, hoping that this was a bad dream he'd wake from and that he didn't have to leave, that his sister was still alive.

It was early in the morning, way to early as Kiyomi woke up. She look at the sleeping face of Hajime. His sister died and that he wanted to go to show his respect, she understood very well but that he needed to stay for mission and for an unknown time...

She was crying silently... they would be alone again just when they were together. But she would wait... Hajime was the only man in her life. She placed her hand on his cheek and stroke softly her thumb over his cheek and was humming softly. Her last night... with Hajime... He slowly woke, still weary and, by the look on her face it seemed that it hadn't been just a bad dream after all. She went forward and snuggled her nose against his and pulled him closer to her. She didn't want to forget him... He sighed deeply, this was going to be difficult to leave. Her hand moved slowly to his head and she entangled her fingers through his hair before she pressed lightly her mouth on his to kiss him.

The thing she was always afraid for... Aizu taking the man she loved away from her. There wasn't much he could do to change the situation unfortunately, so he could only hold her for the time being. She went with her face to his neck and kissed there a few times before she bite him softly to draw blood. While she was drinking, she licked gentle his skin with her tongue. The last time, she could taste him... Because today, he would leave for an unknown time... He inhaled deeply, trailing his fingers through her hair and staring straight ahead at the wall, the wall that looked about as blank as his mind felt. She put her hand on his waist and pulled him closer. She swallowed deep as some tears escaped again.

"Don't cry." He requested, though normally he showed his feelings around her, he had gone back to being an empty shell of a person that wasn't able to feel anything for the time being. There was too much going on.

' ' Sorry...' she said softly and kissed his neck and inhaled his scent. She didn't want to forget... ' ' I love you... I love you...' she repeated in a soft tone.

"You won't forget... Nor would I."

' ' Hajime...' she said with a broken voice as she lay her head on his chest to hear his heart. ' ' I wanted to spend my time with you, training together... helping people... having dinner with the others, to hear uncle Souji to find out what we did again...' she said with a trace of a laugh. ' '... and making love with you... so I can hear your heart beating it's music for me.' ' she said softly.

It hurt him to hear her so upset, he knew that she would be. He thought she would be angry, it would have been preferable to hear her angry, rather than so heartbroken, but no matter how much he wanted he couldn't change things.

"I'll always be with you, even when I'm not here."

' ' Because we carry each other in our heart.' ' she said softly. ' ' Hajime...' she never asked him such thing before... ' ' Hajime... will you kiss me?'

He grasped her chin lightly and turned his head to one side while

pressing his lips over hers, for a moment it stayed like that before he kissed her more deeply. She put her arms around his neck and answered his kiss by kissing him deeper as well. He knew he needed to leave soon, but he'd make the most of the short time he had. She knew... he would leave soon so she gave him one of her most passionate kiss she ever had gave him and he returned it, this would be the last time for a long time.

' ' I will go with you...to ...wave you off...' she said softly. He nodded, leaning his head against hers. ' ' Do you... want to... drink for the last time?'

"Yes..." He brushed his fingertips along her cheek. She opened her kimono. his gaze lowered and he was silent for some time. She stroke his hair and his nose... With some difficulty he swallowed and leaned into her shoulder, it seemed like the lesser of two evils if it were around there. Nobody would notice. Her hand support his head from behind and her other hand was resting on his waist and pulled him closer. Still he hesitated in his actions.

' ' It will be your last time...' she whispers. His only reply was another moment of silence before he gave in a bit into her shoulder, wincing himself at the pain it must cause, but the overwhelming blood lust distracted him before long. ' ' Hajime..hmmm..' she moaned softly in his ear.

This trip would be long, he knew he was going to miss her. She snuggled her nose in his hair and pulled him even tighter. She moved her hips to his to get so close as possible. He inhaled suddenly, the blood lust usually got a reaction out of him, which was why he didn't like it so much. She was laying still except she was stroking his back. She was breathing deep since she loved it when he was drinking from her blood. He was so careful and gentle... She gave a deep sigh of being content.

He let out a breath and moved away a little. "It's probably time for me to go..."

She nodded. ' ' I am going to change myself.' ' she said with a deep sighs. Was it time already?

He also had to get up and fix his uniform up. She put her outfit on and put her hair in a tail. She look at her sleeves and picked on up and gave it to him, saying not a word. He knew what she was meaning with this. He glanced at her and took it, trying it around the top of his blade, so it would always be beneath his hand. She put her hand in his and opened the door of her room.

Hijikata and the others were waiting for him as well. He didn't feel they should make a big deal of it though, and wondered why they were all there.

Sanosuke stepped forward and put his hand on Saito's shoulder. ' ' Good luck... and stay alive. You have a pretty girl here.' ' he smiled gentle.

Heisuke looked down. ' ' Make sure you finish this mission very quick.' ' he said.

Mamoru stepped forward to Saito and hugged him. ' ' So long you are

gone, I will protect my sister for you.'

"I wouldn't expect any less from you." Saito replied.

' Well, I need to. No doubt uncle Souji is going to ask things when you are gone.' he grinned. The girls said their goodbyes to Saito as well.

Kazama was waiting a bit impatiently for their farewells to be said, grumbling something under his breath about being late. Osen stood next to Kazama before she pulled on his collar and gave him a kiss right on his mouth and giggled.

"Hmm... I suppose the goodbyes can wait a bit longer then..." Kazama stated... well... he hadn't exactly said goodbye to Osen yet. Osen smiled and hugged him before she kissed him again.

Hijikata pulled Saito in a tight hug. ' I will miss you, son.' he said softly.

"I will also miss my home." Saito replied. "It is a difficult thing, but this is my duty, and I don't regret it."

' I know... This will be always your home.' said Hijikata and released him.

Kiyomi put her hand in Saito's. ' I will walk with you to the boat.' she said.

"Of course."

' Aunt Osen... keep uncle Kazama here so Hajime can stay longer as well.' said Mamoru with a tease when he saw how his aunt and uncle were in their own world.

"Silence Mamoru, we have duty to attend." Kazama said suddenly, very serious.

' Give my greetings to Kenichi!' said Mamoru happily to his uncle. ' Say that his nephew is missing him!'

Kiyomi tightened her hand in Saito's hand. ' I will be soon back, father.' she said and Hijikata heard in her voice the sound of being sad.

Kazama picked up his gear and headed onto the boat first, since it would give the two time alone together on the docks before they left. So at the end, they stood there on the docks... A lot of men, knowing them as the captain of the Shinsengumi and the daughter of the Vice-commander of the Shinsengumi watched in curious shock.

Kiyomi looked at Saito. ' So..this is it...' she said.

"Yes..."

' I promised.. myself not to cry... but...' And the tears fell down already. Some men looked up, why did she cry? Was the captain rude to her?

' I am going to miss you... and I love you, Hajime..' she said.

He pulled her into a sudden hug. "I love you too. I'll come back to you, I swear on the Shinsengumi's name that I will."

She hugged him back and kissed him for the last time.

' I will wait for you...' she said and look at Saito in his blue eyes.

He forced a smile for her. "I know..."

She gave him a faint smile too. He lifted his bag of gear over his shoulder and turned around, looking at the fleet, then started forward without looking back. He couldn't look back, lest he hesitate. She look at his back and silently she cried. There he was, walking to the fleet. Kazama held out a hand to help Saito aboard and shortly after checking everything was ready the fleet started to pull away from the dock. And that was the moment he felt his stomach churn, the absolute finality of leaving had settled in and he did glance back at the docks.

She inhaled before she shouted. ' ' HAJIME! SMILE! BOTH OF US! ' '

She hoped he would hear it and she smiled, even she was crying. He held up a hand of parting and forced a smile. She held up her hand as well. the fleet was getting smaller and smaller at the horizon. He kept that forced smile until they were too far away to see one another anymore. That was it...

Kiyomi hid her face in her fathers chest. " He will be back for sure." said Hijikata and look at the small spot on the sea, seeing the man gone who he loved as his own son going away to war, but he would be back. He had to come back. Someday.

\* \* \*

><p>The End<p>

A/N Yu here. Yes that is indeed the end of this story. But, if enough people like this first one, we will make a sequel, but until then. This is where the road ends. Saito heading off on a hopeless mission for Aizu just like in the series. The sequel would show his fate.

## 8. Heartfelt Return

Disclaimer: We do not own Hakuoki.

Title: Sweet and Bitter

>Category: AnimeManga Â» Hakuoki

>Authors: Mrs. Hijikata and Yu  
>Language: English

>Rating: Rated: M<br>Genre: Hurt/Comfort/Romance

>Published:<p>

\_A/N: So I Yu and Mrs. Hijikata discussed it... we are going to continue the story on, even if 'tis only for one dear reviewer. We decided we would just start an all new story focusing on SSL for our sequel and continue this story where we left off, as we did not wish

to leave it as it was.\_

**\*\*\_Red Rose Inc. Presents...\_\*\***

**\*\*\_Sweet and Bitter  
><em>\*\***

**\*\*\_Starring Mrs. Hijikata as Hijikata Toshizo\_\*\***

**><strong><em>And<em>\*\*  
><strong><em>Yu starring as Saito Hajime<em>\*\***

**\*\*\_Additional characters also played by Mrs. Hijikata and Yu\_\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>Four and a half year passed and a lot had changed. Kozusu and Souji were now parents of a healthy four year old boy named Isamu meaning courage and it was close to Kondo's real name. Kiyomi had begged her father to take over Saito's squad and after some thinking, she was now captain for time being until her returned.<p>

The war was over and the wild demons were almost gone. Maybe a few that were lingering around. It was a great fight when a herd decided to attack the village. No deaths were involved but some were injured. Heisuke was even forced to drink the Water of Life to survive. Mamoru had now a scar on his left cheek and Kondo was showing the very first grey hair.

And now, Kiyomi was outside, peeling the potatoes for dinner. She sighs. Four and a half year already... She had moved all his stuff to her room, even the dirty magazines that was under the futon of him, the joke of Souji.

Kazama wrote occasional letters on the situation overseas during the war, going on about Saito and a few other things, but mostly Saito as he knew that was where their interest would lie, stating 'He can't handle the waves of the ocean and becomes sick often, he drinks too much also, but he's a good soldier when it comes down to it'

And Saito himself, though not much of a poet, occasionally sent a few Haiku to Kiyomi, because she was the only one that made him poetic. 'Seasons unending, my heart and body, they ache for your touch.'

Kiyomi put the knife down and the potatoes and took out her kimono a small booklet and look in it. All the Haiku's he made was been collected in there. She was reading them and she d a tear. She had wrote him back too. She had wrote him she was leading his squad and about the attack.

She did not asked when he would return... she was afraid he would get worried. But she did wrote, she was missing him and also his touch and that the spot in her bed next to her was cold.

She put the booklet back and picked up the knife and cut herself. She look at her finger with the red liquid. She wondered... No doubt he was starving himself... and she as well.

Today though, today was different. A small fleet slowly pulled into



the docks, full of weary sailors and soldiers that disembarked to return home, now that the long horrible war had finally ended and the Aizu had made a peace pact with the new Government, because the new government had plenty of their own issues to attend to.

One particularly weary soldier stopped momentarily to take in the view of the cherry blossoms and they drew him into a simpler time.

Everyone was in the garden since they had a day off because of the Cherry Blossom Festival. The men was setting up stuff in the garden while the woman were preparing to cook.

Kiyomi look at the cherry blossoms and a soft breeze that was playing with the petals suddenly changed.

She furrowed her brow, what was that? A sign?

' ' Kiyomi-chan, can you help me?' ' asked Isamu with a snapped sandal.

She nodded. When Saito left, she became very quiet and Sanosuke and Shinpachi even made the remark that Mamoru was the new Souji and she the new Saito...

She tied the sandal together. ' ' Here you go.' ' she said softly. ' ' Thank you, Kiyomi-chan.' ' said Isamu.

"Tell me what is it I've missed?" Kazama questioned, finally stepping into their home with the same arrogant and smug look as he always had.

Osen hugged Kazama and kissed his cheek. ' ' Me of course.' ' she said.

>' ' Oi, oi, Aunt Osen, it too early.' ' grinned Mamoru.<p>

' ' Uncle Kazama!' ' called Isamu and hugged his leg.

' ' Welcome Chikage, how was the trip?' ' asked Hijikata.

Kiyomi smiled at Kazama before she worked further. Kazama came back sometimes and all those times... Saito wasn't with him.

"It went well, because the war has ended, there is no use for the fleets long trips. From now on they will remain docked here..." Kazama paused a moment, directing his gaze at Kiyomi. "And also it warrants the return of our soldiers. All of them."

She look up with her eyes wide. Kazama jerked his head to the side to indicate he was still outside, caught up in the cherry blossoms.

She put her stuff down. ' ' Is he...really?' ' she asked softly. Kazama nodded, giving a rare smile to his niece, that girl deserved to be spoiled and he was happy knowing what was about to take place.

Her runs suddenly towards the cherry blossoms at the other side of the house and then she saw him. It was true... he was here... Hearing the sound of running footsteps he paused in his thoughts, ah, Kazama did his part. He had her alone. He dropped his bag from his shoulder and turned around with a faint smile.

"I'm home..."

Her eyes filled up with tears as she ran to him. '' Hajime!''

The moment she was close enough to him he pulled her into a tight embrace, lifting her into his arms with a brief spin, before setting her back down. "I missed you so much."

She hugged him tightly. '' I missed you also so much.'' It was really him, his scent everything.

"I have something to ask you..." He said quietly, burying his nose in her hair for the moment and breathing in. "I didn't ask before... because I wasn't sure I would truly make it back alive... so I didn't tie you down but now... I want to ask it..."

'' What is it?'' she asked as she lean in his chest.

"It makes me nervous... to ask it w-well... I... want..." He took a step back and got down on a knee, taking her hand between both of his own. "I want you... to marry me."

Her face flushed suddenly by this but she smiled brightly. '' Yes! Yes, I want to marry you!'' she said.

In return he gave his most sincere smile he had to offer. "That... makes me happy... more than anything."

She laughed softly and stepped closer and put his face between her hands if she gives him a deep kiss.

It seemed as if all the bad he had been through in the war was far behind him... now that he was home. He was home. Finally. The war was over and they could start to live like they wanted to.

'' I don't want to share you yet with the others... do you have a problem with that?'' she ask with a smile.

"No, I don't have a problem with it."

'' Shall we go then to our room?'' she asked with flushing cheeks, she hoped she didn't sounded pervy. He picked up the dropped bag and nodded. She held his hand and smiled brightly. She couldn't stop smiling at all.

"Things seem different."

'' Yea. Souji became father and well... Inoue and Shimida sleep now with the soldiers. Same for Kondo. The Captains are sleeping here and for the rest... everyone is the same. Oh, and your room is now Isamu's room.'' she smiled.

"...I feel sorry for him..."

She laughed softly. '' He makes sure Isamu won't hear them... how I don't know.''

He smiled and laughed a little as well, it amused him to hear how things had gone while he was away.

' ' And father and mother are still down well. Even Mamoru sleeps next to them, he won't even hear them anymore. And if you wonder how I do know. I didn't sleep much.' ' she said.

"I didn't either." She smiled and opened the room. Her room was changed indeed now the stuff of Saito was also there. Her Katana and Kodachi were hanging on the wall and underneath was the standard of Saito's weapons, empty. He set his bag near the door and glanced at her. "What else have I missed?"

' ' The huge attack with the ferals. That was some fight.' '

"Mm." He reached forward and pulled her back into his chest with one hand, closing the door with the other.

She leans against him. ' ' And me... you missed me...' '

"I missed you a lot." He pressed his lips along her neck.

' '...' she made a brief sound, it was a long time ago she felt it.  
' ' I missed you a lot as well. It was so...lonely.'

"Not anymore... I won't go anywhere anymore..."

' ' so you can stay with me...' ' she whispers as her hand went through his hair. ' ' I love you...' '

He relaxed a bit, her touch felt so good after being away from her for so long. Like finally taking a breath of fresh air after holding it for so long.

She felt his breath on her skin. She sighs deep. ' ' Hajime...' ' saying his name softly in a tone...

He reached up and pulled the fabric of her clothes down over her shoulder and slowly trailed his tongue over her skin, inwardly groaning at how good even just her skin tasted to him after so long. He had missed her so much...

' ' ... Ah...' ' she gave out. Not a suppressed moan... but a normal one. She inhaled deep. For the first time without hesitation, at the sound of her voice, he sank his teeth into her shoulder hard enough to draw blood. It had been too long. ' '... Ahh Ha-...' ' she didn't even finished it and a pant followed it. The sensation of biting her and drink her blood. It was too long...

He turned her into the wall, leaving her with nowhere to turn other than against him. By that movement, her outfit fell more from her body and she pulled him against her and bit him as well and took his blood. The sweet warm sensation that was stroking her tongue made her very warm from inside. He grabbed her chin abruptly and turned her face away to force her to kiss him, licking at her lips intently, tasting their blood mix. She licked his lips as well, meeting his before she kissed him very deep. How long she longed for him, to touch him, to smell him, to hear him, to taste him. And now he was back. With shaky hands he reached down and unbuckled his sword belt, letting the heavy weapon come off from weighing his shoulder down and dropping it aside so that it was out of the way. She pulled his jacket off and dropped it next to him while she kept kissing

him.

"Do you..." Well, he just wasn't sure how to ask, but he knew he needed to ask first or he'd never be comfortable with doing it.

' ' Yes, I want to...' she answered him. ' ' I longed for you...' she admitted in a soft whisper.

He undid the other belt and his pants, lowering them just enough before lifting her against him. It was impossible to contain the quick pace of his heart. She undid his shirt and her own clothing and pressed her lips on his. It probably wasn't appropriate, doing this like this, but... at the moment he just couldn't bring himself to care enough. It had been too long, he just shoved anything else aside and pressed himself into her with a deep groan.

' ' Hajime!' she moaned loudly and arched her back against the wall.

' ' Hhmmm? Did I heard something?' wondered Mamoru while he was standing next to Shinpachi and Sanosuke.

Shinpachi rubbed the back of his head uneasily. "Oh boy..."

Mamoru look at him. ' ' what?'

"I'm just... going to go on patrol..." Shinpachi said, quickly getting up.

' ' What about the festival? Everyone has a day off?' said Mamoru. ' ' Ah! I get it! You are ashamed.' he grinned. ' ' Uncle Souji, ... After all these years, uncle Shinpachi is still shy.'

"Ohhh?" Souji looked on with interest.

"It isn't that! I'm refraining from murdering him!" Shinpachi complained.

' ' Come on, She is an adult now and we all had enough lessons from Uncle Souji.' smirked Mamoru.

"Besides... I have a dango shop chick to visit." Shinpachi added. Well, he had to maintain his manly dignity now didn't he

' ' Again? Shinpachi...' said Sanosuke with a smile.

' ' Argh! No way! I saw her first, Shinpatsu!' said Heisuke.

Hijikata looked around and smiled. They were like a real family now. ' ' Shinpachi... I don't mind if you are walking somewhere else but... I want to see you back in a hour.' said Hijikata.

"Sure thing." Shinpachi assured. "You may have saw her first, but she certainly had fun with my muscles... if you catch my drift."

' ' What the hell? If you did why now walking away...' laughed Mamoru now. ' ' Uncle Souji... Do you believe this?'

"Hmm, not sure. I'd like to see proof." Souji stated, and Shinpachi

grumbled something and lifted his shirt to show the scratch marks.

"Proof. Look here."

' ' Oooh, Uncle Souji! Uncle Sano! Let's bet Kiyomi will give Saito deeper marks than that! And even more.' ' smirked Mamoru evilly.

' ' I am in!' ' said Sanosuke. ' ' I set 150 yen on it.' '

"I'm not making bets." Shinpachi said, frowning. He didn't like to think of his niece that way. He was far too over-protective.

"Hm, Kiyomi being a wild cat..." Souji pondered. "I'll take that bet."

' ' I set in 100 yen.' ' said Mamoru. ' ' What about you, uncle Heisuke?' ' asked Mamoru.

' ' Naah, they may be loud but still shy.' ' said Heisuke. ' ' I will set in 160 yen.' '

Meanwhile Kiyomi was kissing his neck and shoulder while she hands where in his hair, even pulling a bit by his movements. The sounds that escaped her throat was in the rhythm of his movements. He tightly gripped her hips and pressed himself harder against her, breathing heavily and though he was mostly a quiet person... now was one of those exceptions.

' ' Hajime... ooh Hajime...' ' she moaned and her hands were all over his back and shoulders and her legs tighten more around his waist. Kiyomi was kissing Saito with passion. She had missed him so much...and for a long time. Saito shifted several times, trying to get into just the right position that he was comfortable with, but considering the situation it grew a bit tiresome when he was already worn out from the long trip home.

' ' Getting a bit tired... hmmm?' ' she asked softly against his lips.

"It's fine."

' ' We can go to the futon...or I can stand... I don't mind. You are back... so I can love you again everyday and night.' ' she smiled.

"Maybe just something more comfortable." She went off him and tapped his nose and stand quickly behind him and gave a soft tab on his butt, playing with him. He glanced at her over his shoulder.

"Hm."

' ' Come here, you sexy butt.' ' she joked and took his hand and lead him to their futon and when they were there, she kissed him. She smiled as she pushed him down on the futon and pressed herself on to him, moving right away as she leaned forward to kiss his neck. She lay her head on his chest, hearing his heart. ' ' There is my music...' ' she said as she kissed his chest.

"I wonder if they've heard us..."

' ' No doubt...' ' she said and nibbled his neck. ' ' And... I don't care...' ' she said. ' ' It's you and me... now...' ' she panted.

He sat up and pressed his fingers into her thighs, breathing deeply, no doubt he would probably leave bruises from how tightly he was holding her to him.

' '... aah...' ' she moaned and scratched his chest with her nails. The scratch... well, you would think he was being attacked by a forest cat. Despite his best efforts a groan escaped him. It may not seem it, but it actually felt good to him. She kissed him again, leaving a trail of kissing marks as she dug her nails in his skin. Everything, that was restored for four years... all her feelings... were now flowing out and damn, she loved him and she was the happiest woman ever because he had asked her to marry him. He wrapped his arms around her and crushed her to his chest, he hadn't been like this before, it was the first time he was ever rough with her, because they had been apart too long and he just needed her right now so he couldn't be worried with how rough he was being, but somehow he had the feeling she didn't groan loudly and was panting heavy but being this close again. Even it was rough... it was only the need...the need love each other again. To share the feeling that they missed from each other... ' ' Hajime... say my name... please.' ' she asked.

"Kiyomi... it's that name... that I've missed... for the past four years..." He breathed deeply, closing his eyes for a moment.

She moved slower and was catching her breath. ' ' Hajime... Oh Hajime... I missed you so much... I was chasing you after in my dreams...' ' she said and touched his cheek.

"I know... exactly how you've felt. I felt the same."

She put her head against his. ' ' You are back...I am so happy...' '

"I'm happy to be back." His grip on her loosened a bit.

She smiled as she kissed him and pick her pace up a bit. ' ' No debt...anymore... you are free from everything except me... I will be stuck on you forever...' ' she said and kissed his cheek,

"I don't mind." He turned into her kiss.

She smiled brightly as she went to his neck, following with her tongue a vein untils she bit him rough and was drinking again. His blood... was right now a gift... He turned her over onto her back, taking over for her.

' '...' ' she groaned when she was on her back and look at him. ' ' Your eyes... I missed them. So blue...' '

"I missed everything about you..." He leaned over her, kissing along her stomach, just because he could manage to reach.

' ' Me as we-... oh...' ' she moaned softly. Everything was so sensitive... She kept touching him were she could reach... She was eager to discover everything again. He winced faintly, her sounds went straight to his gut. Just to hear more of those sounds he

deliberately slowly traced over each of her ribs with his tongue and proceeded to kiss upwards. ''...nnngg...'' She arched her head in her pillow. What was he doing? It felt wonderful.

Bringing his hands down to her hips he pulled her more firmly against himself, letting out a sound akin to a growl, all the while he was still kissing and licking whatever was in his reach. Something just clicked into place, maybe it was the Oni half of him that desired to be this way. She was whimpering, a wave of feelings and emotions overwhelming her and gave herself over to him.

'' Ha...ji...me...'' whimpering his name... She placed her hands on his shoulder since he was moving everywhere over her body. He bit at her side lightly, not hard enough to draw blood, but... Her chest raise up and a growl left her throat. It was too much and a small tension started to build up down in her abdomen. He soothed over the spot he bit soon after. Her hand went over his head and ruffled through his hair. '' I love you.''

He moved up and leaned over her. "I love you too..."

She kissed him. '' I am close...''

"I can tell..."

'' What are you going to do about it?''

He merely raised a brow and sat back, holding her hips in place while he increased his pace, keeping his eyes locked with hers Her eyes went to half close as she moaned repeatedly and each time the moan became heavier and heavier. The sight of him, his eyes and lips... while he was covered in sweat... it was the most beautiful sight she ever had seen. There was no doubt, he was definitely intent to have all of her as much as possible. Suddenly she tighten around him as she pulled on the sheets underneath her and arched her back, calling out his name so loud...'' Hajime!''

He swallowed with some difficultly and pulled away at the last minute, even if it was a bit messy, it was better that he didn't risk it even with the tea she drank every morning.

'' Hajime?'' she asked while she was still panting.

"It's fine. I finished." There wasn't anything else to talk about it.

'' I am save...'' she said softly. '' Our first time you...you know...'' she said as she leaned against his chest. '' I am sorry if I sound selfish.''

"It's... just a precaution..." yes, he'd have preferred to stay and finish, but he just couldn't take that risk. "What do you mean selfish? How...? Do you... want..."

She blushed now very bad but she nodded. '' I wanted everything from you...like you wanted it from me...'' she mumbled. '' Four years without...your lover...it's painful...''

"I... I'm sorry..."

She sighs softly. '' Tonight you will do it right...'' she says and kissed his cheek. No doubt they would be all the way again. He glanced away. She definitely wanted that from him, but... didn't she understand? She smiled faintly. He merely sighed quietly. It was a difficult situation.

'' Hey... It's alright...'' she said and kissed his cheek. '' I understand, you are careful, you always have been. And now we are engaged... I want to tell it to everyone. I can even shout it from the roof.'' she smiled. '' But I won't... otherwise Uncle Souji will tease me.'' she giggled.

"That we're engaged? You don't want Souji to know it?"

'' I mean that I won't stand on the roof shouting. But I really want to tell father... I really do.'' she smiled. '' And Mamoru, and... just everyone...!''

"You can if you want..." Though, he suspected Hijikata already knew. After all it was him that he had asked.

'' I saw... you had still my sleeves, even it was ragged. I hope it was useful for you. I...I used your old scarf to sleep with...''

He smiled. "It was... I hope it was as useful to you as yours was to me."

'' Yes... When I felt lonely... your soft scarf was supporting me...''

"You can have 's best if it goes to use."

She kissed him. '' Thank you.''

"I'm actually happy for you to have it."

she smiled and she leans against him, staying like that for awhile. How long, she didn't knew. '' Hajime, everyone has missed you as well. I think it is time to greet them.''

"Must I?"

'' You don't want to? Do you want to rest instead?''

"I would rather spend my night with you, but you're right. It's best to make an appearance..."

She smiled. '' They are in the garden, preparing a feast for the cherry blossoms. We can stay for some time... until... we retreat.''

"Alright."

She stood up and went to a bowl with water and put to washing clothes in, one for her and one for him. She freshen herself up and look at him while doing that. He stretched a little, his muscles were sore and aching, but it was worth it.

She sat in front of him. '' I can't wait...to be Mrs. Saito.''



He dropped his arms in his lap and watched her. "Even if it means giving up the name Hijikata?"

' ' I can drop my father's name but not his appearance. ' ' she smiled.  
' ' And Mamoru will succeed the name. ' '

"Mmm... the source of many rumors."

' ' Many rumors? ' ' she asked with her head to a side.

He merely shook his head and smiled. "It doesn't matter." He mainly refereed to the rumor that the men thought he was with her only because she looked like Hijikata.

She smiled as well and kissed his forehead. ' ' Shall I wash you since you are a bit tired? ' '

"What about you? Surely you're also tired."

' ' Shall we stay then? And rest? ' '

"I don't think we can. Otherwise they'll come barging in."

' ' True. ' ' she said and stood up bring his towel. She wiped the sweat from his face and smiled.

"And also... I haven't been able to see the Vice Commander yet..."

' ' He will be happy to see you back. ' ' she said. She looked around, somewhere was her undergarment.

He cleared his throat and nodded. "Ah, right."

She found it and put it on. ' 'He knew I felt lonely and sat next to me, some quiet for hours but... making sure I was alright. ' ' she smiled.

"Hopefully he isn't angry that I made you wait so long."

' ' No...after all your returned. You promised him and me and you did. ' '

"I see... I'm glad..." He sighed quietly. "I also have to see what Souji's been up to." No doubt Souji would tease him, but he also missed his closest friend.

' ' Well, except for being a daddy. He taught him that Uncle Kondo is his grandfather. ' '

"I see... somehow I'm not surprised."

' ' And when Mamoru was not around, he teased me a lot. ' '

"You didn't expect him not to did you?"

' ' If you knew how. Dirty magazines so I could practice, saying I should welcome you back with... lapdance? I don't even know what it is. ' ' she laughed softly.

"Hmm, probably some western idea or something from the Red Light district."

' ' I think so... but I love our welcome much better.' ' she said with pink cheeks.

He smiled and brushed a hand over her slightly warmed cheek. "So do I."

She leaned in his hand and placed her hand over his. In his lifetime, he just never imagined he'd be lucky enough to have someone love him. He always thought it was an impossible thing and that he would die alone somewhere for his country. Funny how things turned out sometimes.

A soft knock was heard on the door, a careful one. He blinked several times in surprise and glanced at the door. He hadn't expected it.

Kiyomi gave quickly the sleep kimono of him. ' ' Put it on.' ' she whispers and grabbed her own one and put it on and tied it. She walked to the door and slide half open, seeing her father.

' ' Father...I...' ' she was a bit embarrassed, that her father saw her like this but he was nice and put his hand on her head.

' ' That was some surprise to have him back.' ' he smiled gentle.

He pulled it on, though didn't seem to be in a panicked rush, he doubted Hijikata would be angry with him.

' ' Yes... it was.' ' she said with a faint smile.

' ' But you are not the only one to see him.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' Souji and Mamoru are waiting for him...and...I am as well.' '

"Sorry..." Saito spoke up once he was dressed. "I should have visited with everyone first... things... didn't go as planned exactly."

' ' Hajime... good to see you and welcome back.' ' said Hijikata with a smile. ' ' And don't worry... it seems Kiyomi can't stop shining so...if I am right, you asked her didn't you?'

Kiyomi look at her father. ' ' You knew he wanted to?' ' she asked and

Hijikata nodded. ' ' He asked for my permission.' '

"I wouldn't have been able to bring myself to ask without it."

Hijikata look at Hajime. ' ' So from now... you should call me dad or father... son.' ' And put his hand on Hajime's hair, ruffling it. Saito smiled briefly and nodded. Hijikata pulled both of them in a hug. ' ' Finally, everything will be fine now.' '

"Don't hog him all for yourself Mr. Proud Father in law." Souji complained from behind him.

Hijikata released them and smiled. ' ' We all missed you, Hajime as

you can see.'' and Hijikata look at Souji.

"Seems he didn't miss us at all though." Souji teased with a faint smirk, taking in their changed clothes.

Kiyomi was blushing firmly, of course... they couldn't escape the sounds of them.

"Sounded fun though."

'' In that you are wrong, uncle Souji. '' said Kiyomi. '' It was wonderful.'' And she leans against Saito.

"So you're saying... It wasn't fun?" Now, now, Souji would have fun here.

'' Wonderful means everything... fun, loving, joy, happiness, the tension, everything...''

"Hmm... you should tell it in detail." Souji kept an eye on Saito and he seemed restless that everyone had heard. Really Souji was just trying to win the bet.

'' We were loud enough...uncle Souji.'' she said with flushed cheeks as she stood up.

"That's not enough detail."

Mamoru walked in and hugged Hajime from behind. '' Welcome back bro!'' he said. Because of that, the kimono moved a bit and a small scratch was seen. '' Sis, don't harm him will ya?'' he said and tried to give her a friendly slap.

Kiyomi dodged it. '' That's none of your concern.'' she said with red cheeks.

'' Aaahh she is more lively again. When you were gone I really needed to check her if she didn't turned in a statue or not.''

"That's..." Saito pondered, not sure how to respond and Souji's eyes narrowed in like a hawk on the scratch he saw. Oh, yes... that bet was won.

Mamoru pulled up Hajime's kimono and saw more. '' Nee-chan... He just came back.'' he said and placed it back. '' Doesn't... ooh what do we have here?'' asked Mamoru when he pulled up her kimono, seeing the bruise. '' Two wildcats here... so quiet but being alone...'' teased Mamoru with the same grin that Souji had. Hijikata chuckled. He missed this...

"Mmmm." Saito narrowed his eyes unhappily, now from Souji he would have expected it, but Mamoru not quite so much, but from now on he'd have to keep an eye on him just the same.

Hijikata look at Hajime. '' I know right?'' Kiyomi tried to slap Mamoru but she missed and Mamoru stuck his tongue out.

'' Baby brother, I give you ten seconds to get out my room.'' she said.

' ' But Hajime, Mamoru was right. When you were gone... She wasn't her usual self.' ' said Hijikata, seeing his two children sharing a bond of brother and sister.

Saito sighed. "I don't recall Souji sticking his tongue out at-never mind yes I do."

' ' Tongue sticking?' ' asked Mamoru and Kiyomi was now chasing Mamoru out of her room and closed the door.

' ' One Souji is enough...' ' she said.

Souji laughed in amusement, he was really in the highlight of his life with so many interesting things to see and do. Kiyomi walked to Saito and hugged him from behind. She didn't care if others were, she just want to hug him.

' ' I still need to thank you for teaching Kiyomi your technique with the sword. She saved lives with it. Even Kosuzu and Isamu.' ' said Hijikata.

He looked surprised to hear it, but he didn't know what to say on the matter.

' ' That was...' ' said Kiyomi softly.

' ' It was then that Kosuzu and the other woman were at home while the men were fighting. Kiyomi stayed behind with them. When Kosuzu was alone with Isamu, a few wild demons were in the head quarters. They wanted to attack her and the baby but Kiyomi saved them.' ' said Hijikata.

"I see."

' ' I am going back, do I need to say you guys will be present in a half hour?' ' asked Hijikata to Hajime and Kiyomi.

"Sooner."

"Unless they get carried away again." Souji added.

' ' We can...' ' she said, still her head on Saito's back.

"... ohhh... admitting it now are we?" Souji's brows rose, more with amusement than surprise.

' ' Jealous?' ' she asked. It felt she had the power to beat everyone... now Hajime was back.

"Jealous of what exactly...?"

' ' Of our moment together.' ' said Kiyomi and placed her head on Saito's shoulder and leans her head against his.

Hijikata smiled, he saw how happy they were. ' ' Souji, let's go, give them some time so they can fresh up.' '

"Hai, hai..." Souji was still working just to pry answers out of them though.

They left the room and Kiyomi kissed Saito's cheek. '' They are waiting...''

"Yes..." Saito mused it would be interesting these ones.

She put her kimono off and gave a washing towel to Saito. '' Here...'' she smiled.

"Thank you."

She picked up her own towel and brushed her arms off. He lightly tapped his fingers against the floor, watching her. It was difficult to hold back from taking her in his arms again after being away so long.

She look at him and smiled and brushed her towels against his neck. '' You won't get anything done if you keep staring.'' she smiled.

"I'm entertaining myself..."

She smiled and opened his kimono and took his towel from his hands and washed his chest. '' How unfair... what about me?'' she smiled.

"Hmmm... if you're asking me to touch you... I'll give you the fair warning that I'll get you dirty again within seconds." Regardless he stole the towel from her grasp and retook it, running it over her cheek and then pressing a kiss to the same place he just washed. "Something like that."

'' I think we don't have a problem with that.'''she said when she leaned in his kiss. He continued taking care of her since she was cleaning him. She put his kimono off and the towel traced over his neck, shoulders, arms abdomen, everywhere were she could reach, giving him here and there a small kiss.

"N-not too low on my stomach... please..." He paused at the way it sounded. "Not that I... not that I don't like it only... to get worked up again when we have to go out..."

'' You... are doing the same to me...'' she said. He was really touching on sensitive spots on her body. A shiver went over her spine from the soft pleasure.

He smiled and glanced away. "Let's just handle our own... cleaning so we don't have to worry."

'' Yea, I think that is better.'' she smiled and so they did. Fifteen minutes later, they joined the group. It seems Shinpachi was back as well.

A little boy, who was sitting on Kosuzu her lap was staring at the unknown person. Saito glanced at him, he certainly did have some of their mixed looks, but those eyes were unmistakeable.

The little boy look at his father. '' Papa, who is that?'' he asked. Chizuru came with a small cup to Kiyomi and she took it, it was a extra cup to be sure. Kiyomi flushed deep and Chizuru hugged her daughter.

"I don't know... let's see if you can guess who he is..." Souji smiled.

Saito looked away, it wasn't hard to tell what the drink was and he felt a bit odd, but there was one thing he thought of. Though how to word it...

"Ah... C-Chizuru... thank you... for having this person... who was destined to be at my side..." He tried to say it quickly, but fumbled instead. He wasn't sure she approved or not, he didn't have much interaction with that person.

Chizuru look at Saito and smiled. '' No problem, Hajime-kun. I am glad my daughter found the person she loves with her heart. And you are a good person.''

Souji laughed quietly, finding such a fumble interesting to say the least.

'' Mother...everyone... Hajime and I got something to tell.'' she smiled and put her hand in Saito's. '' Ah...it's ... hime!... Hajime!'' said Isamu and Mamoru and Heisuke were laughing since Saito was being called princess.

"That's my boy..." Souji gloated.

Isamu smiled. Chizuru look at Kiyomi. '' Something to tell?'' she asked and Kiyomi look at Saito with a smile.

"H-h-how should I tell it...?"

'' That you made me the happiest woman of Japan?'' smiled Kiyomi.

"Oh... he finally did it huh?" Souji revealed that Saito had confided it in him some time ago.

'' Did I miss something?'' asked Kosuzu.

'' Hajime and I are engaged.'' smiled Kiyomi and Chizuru hugged them.

'' What a wonderful news.''

Souji crossed his arms. "I was wondering how long it would take... now it's up to you to have kids. Everyone else does."

Except Saito paled a bit at the words.

'' We want... to spend more time together...the two of us...since we...missed a lot.'' said Kiyomi.

Though Souji raised a brow, something was off there. It didn't seem like that was a good enough reason and he wondered just what was going through Saito's mind. Kiyomi sat down with the others.

'' You look much better now since Hajime is back. '' said Sanosuke.

' ' Thank you, Uncle Sano. ' '

Saito to avoid questions poured himself a drink of sake, anytime Souji asked a single word... he would drink... and of course Souji knew this was the plan and he would take advantage of it just to get the guy drunk. Sanosuke and Shinpachi where showing off again while Heisuke laughed and Mamoru was talking with his father. The girls were chitchatting about clothes and household stuff.

"So Hajime-kun... just what are you thinking right now?" And true to Souji's guess Saito took a drink to avoid answering and Souji's smile widened. Saito still had yet to catch on to this game.

Some time went by and the boys were pretty drunk. Isamu was sleeping on a blanket and everyone had fun. Saito stood up to take a walk for a bit, get away from the drunkards... and Souji.

' ' Come on, Kiyomi... tell what do you want? ' ' asked Osen a bit tipsy.

' ' I don't mind a boy or girl...so long it is healthy I am happy. ' ' she answered. ' ' But not yet, first the two of us. ' '

Saito glanced back, listening to the conversation. And Souji raised a brow.

"But eventually... right...? Eventually you will so what do you want?"

' ' If it is possible... I want a boy and a girl... ' ' flushed Kiyomi deeply.

"A boy and a girl. Interesting." Souji glanced at Saito to see his reaction, he knew he was listening, but it wasn't the look he was expecting... it was more of an upset expression.

' ' But if it is one child, I will be happy as well. ' ' she said.

"Does Hajime-kun want children?" Souji asked, leaning back, he assumed that was the result of the look. Kiyomi look at Saito and saw his expression. She walked to him.

"Oh... did I get him in trouble?" Souji pondered.

She placed her two hands on his face and pecked his lips. ' ' What is it, itoshii? ' ' she asked softly.

He closed his eyes momentarily. "Nothing."

' ' Why do you have that look on your face? ' ' she asked gentle as put her nose against his. ' ' tell me, I won't get mad or sad. ' '

"I was just thinking about some things. That's all."

She took him by his hand and went to the dojo with him. She knew he don't want to tell things when everyone was present.

' ' We are alone now. Please... I don't want secrets. ' ' she said sweet.

"...it isn't... it's not like that."

' ' Then what is it? I won't leave you... I can't... I love you too much...' '

His expression turned more into a frown then. Was that... no, he didn't want to think about it.

' ' Hajime...' ' she called his name. ' ' Please...' '

"Just don't worry..." He reached up a hand, lightly threading his fingers through her hair and keeping his gaze on that movement. She stared at him, she wanted to know. "I..." She was still going to press him for answers despite his requests to drop it?

She sighs and look to the ground before she look to him. ' ' I trust you and I will try not to worry.' ' she said with a faint smile.

"Please don't..." He requested, that tone made him feel even worse than he did. He felt guilty.

' ' Don't what?' ' she asked.

"Don't do that... that kind of tone... don't use it... you're making me feel bad."

' ' That was not my intention...' '

He sighed and rubbed a hand over his eyes. "You should go back otherwise they'll think that we snuck off to..."

She hugged him and buried her face in his neck. ' ' I love you. I really do, more than anything.' '

"I know..." He was a bit confused though why she suddenly hugged him.

' ' I am going back to the room. They are too drunk.' '

"Are you sure?" He glanced towards the door. "I'm going to stay a bit longer."

' ' Really? Then I will sit next to you and doze off against your arm.' '

"Will you be comfortable? It didn't sound like you wanted to be around a bunch of drunk men."

' ' Not without you...' ' In that he remained silent, taking the hint that she did not want to be alone at this time. ' ' Shall we go back then?' '

"Yes."

She put her hand in his and smiled. He led her out, although, by the look on Souji's face he already assumed they were sneaking off to do the deed. She put her arms around Saito's arm.



"Getting at it again so soon, Hajime-kun?" Souji asked.

Kiyomi look at Saito when she heard Souji. Saito merely ignored the jokes as per usual and Souji looked to be in deep thought about the issue at hand. That look wasn't quite the joyous one he expected at the talk of children. So... then... why was he so upset at the prospect?

And just in the moment it hit him like a cannon to the gut.  
"Oh..."

Osen came back with more drinks and snacks while the moon was shining through the cherry blossoms.

Kiyomi smiled and look at the falling petals as the breeze lift up her hair. Souji glanced at the two of them in silence, if his conclusion was right then he was going to have to test it. Chizuru gave everyone something to drink. Kiyomi took a dango stick and some sauce stuck on her cheek. Saito took notice and reached into his jacket for a cloth, bringing it to her face than immediately changing his mind and leaning in, with the cloth in between everyone's view and them, licked it away.

Though Souji was watching the exchange that only made it more so that things didn't make sense to him. They were getting along quite well, so that meant whatever the issue was he hadn't told her.

She flushed at this gesture and giggled softly.

' ' Damn, is it hot here or is it just me?' ' said Osen with a sweet tease.

Kazama raised a brow at the unlady like curse, perhaps she was drunk tonight. "Perhaps it's time for the two of us to retire"

' ' Really? Is the party over then?' ' she asked and leaned forward to face Kazama close.

"For the two of us the party has just begun." Kazama replied.

And Souji stuck his tongue out, his grudge with that guy made this a disturbing moment for him.

Osen giggled and held Kazama's arm. ' ' let's party then!' ' she cheered.

' ' It seems... it will get busy this night.' ' said Heisuke.

Kazama led her out and they went off on there own while Souji made a disgusted sound and dropped onto his back. Then again if she was drunk, although Kazama pretended to be all that take what he wants when he wants it guy, he wouldn't take advantage of Osen like that.

Kosuzu picked up Isamu. ' ' Souji, I bring him to his bed, its getting chilly for him.' '

Souji nodded. "I'll stay a little longer... I need to confirm an idea."

' ' Alright. Have fun.' ' she said and kissed Souji. Kiyomi smiled, even Souji was a teasing uncle, he cared for everyone.

' ' Mother, Father is sleeping.' ' smiled Kiyomi and Chizuru look up. Hijikata was indeed sleeping.

' ' Shinpachi, look at that. That is not our demon vice commander but a lamb.' ' joked Sanosuke.

Saito briefly glanced at him, he knew that challenge of idea confirming was directed at him. Chizuru was talking with Kiyomi and Mamoru had joined Sanosuke and Shinpachi with Heisuke to show off the muscles. Hijikata was leaning against an old cherry blossom tree, enjoying the fresh air. Saito slowly stood up, since the day had started on the long journey home he had been tired, but since Kiyomi was busy talking he had no wish to interrupt her and started back on his own, somewhere down the hall and heard a voice call out to him.

"Hajime-kun... you didn't think I'd let you sneak off did you? Not without answer my question."

Saito was about to keep walking instead of answering when Souji spoke up.

"Your sister." Those two words halted him in place and he glanced over his shoulder at Souji. "I'm right then. It's because of your sister. Because she died in child birth..."

"... Souji... you don't know anything." Saito said, shoulders lowered into a heavy slump, completely unusual for the stoic man.

"And because of that you're too afraid."

"Souji... shut up..." Saito continued to the room, although the words were harsh Souji wasn't at all offended, because he knew he jabbed a very sore spot to find out this little bit of information.

Sanosuke, Heisuke and the others went to their room. Kiyomi and Chizuru put all the cups and plates together. They would clean it up tomorrow. Souji went back to his place leaning on the wall. Now it was up to him if he wanted to share that bit of information with Kiyomi or let Saito do it... if Saito would admit to it. Which was unlikely. Kiyomi walked in her room. She didn't see Saito yet. So she put her outfit off and stood there in her undergarment. She untied her hair and start to brush it. Souji got off the wall and headed back to his own room, he'd have to tell her sometime. She put her sleeping kimono on and went with the bowl to the water source, to get fresh water.

Saito had detoured and sat outside quietly with a drink, becoming a bit startled when he noticed her. Souji had really frazzled his nerves with his questioning.

She pulled the rope and the bucket came up for water. It seemed she had yet to notice him and so he remained quiet, setting the drink aside and clenching his hands to stop the shaking. She grabbed the bucket and gave a short yell, there was a frog in it...and she hated frogs...they were so...slippery.

He immediately stood up. "Are you alright?"

She look behind her and saw him. '' Yes...there was...was...a frog in it...' she said with a face of disgust.

"Pardon...?" He didn't quite understand.

'' There was a frog in the bucket... I hate frogs...' she said.

"Why do you hate them?" He questioned, glancing at it. Though, it was true that water probably wouldn't be all so comfortable to use now.

'' They're so squishy and...slippery and those eyes...''

"Mmm..." He made a face. "So are other things..."

'' Yours is not squishy...' she said and her cheeks became red..

He merely raised a brow in response. "That wasn't what-ever mind."

She look at before she laughed softly. '' Sorry...' she said with a big smile. '' I will get water from the other source.''

"I'll get it for you."

'' Thank you.' she said and kissed his cheek.

"You can just rest. It's been a long day."

'' I will... I will keep your spot warm.' she smiled

He headed off to get it for her, though he himself was tired, he didn't want her to push herself too much and shortly returned with the water, though wondering what she needed it for.

She was in her room and smiled when she saw Saito. '' Thank you.' she said. She made her hands wet and stroke it through her hair and brushed it then. '' This way I can brush it better.' she smiled.

"I see." He sat down and stared at his hands for a moment.

'' What is it? Did you had a hard time there?' she asked.

"A hard time?"

'' On the mainland? With the war...and of course, the funeral...' she said softly.

"Ahh... I... don't remember feeling anything..."

She touched his cheek softly. '' Let's rest...' she said. '' It was a long travel for you.''

His expression was purely miserable recalling the events on the mainland.

'' Hey... Come here...' she said and placed his face on her

shoulder. '' Let it out if it is needed... it is me and you now...''

There was a hesitation, but he held onto her and rested there, he was too tired for anything else. Now that he was finally home he just wanted to rest like this.

'' Let me change you.'' she said and undid his shirt and pants. She walked to the futon and picked up his sleeping kimono and put it on.

'' There... come, my love.'' she said.

He felt lucky that she was there, otherwise, normally he would just pass out in his uniform without a moment's hesitation, sometimes he couldn't even sleep at all, going days on end without rest.

She held his hand and guided him to the futon and both lay down. She pulled him against her and lay his head on her chest so he could hear her heart beating. '' I love you.''

"I'm afraid to sleep... if I wake up... and coming home was just a dream..."

'' You are home...'' she whispers and kissed him. '' My lips are real and my voice too..''

He slowly closed his eyes and rested there. She held him and was humming softly, maybe that would relax him. It took awhile, but he slowly fell asleep there, but even falling asleep the frown was etched into his features. She held him closely against her before she fell asleep as well. For once it seemed he would sleep peacefully, but then that changed and he started having nightmares, mumbling and struggling against some unseen enemy.

Kiyomi woke up and tried to wake him. '' Hajime.. shhh... Hajime it's alright.''

He continued to struggle, grabbing at the fabric at her shoulder tightly, then suddenly moving and shoving her onto her back and looming over her dangerously. For a moment his eyes were unclear and unfocused, trapped in the dream as if he were in a fight with an enemy before realization seemed to come to his eyes and he released her shoulder.

She tapped slightly against his cheek. '' Hajime.. It's me...'' she said gently.

He let out a shaky breath. "I'm sorry..." maybe it was too dangerous to stay? What if he accidentally hurt her?

'' It's alright...'' she said and stroke a strand of hair behind his ear. '' It's alright...'' she said softly.

"It isn't... if I hurt you..."

'' ... I will kick your butt...'' she smiled. '' I am here... in good and bad times...''

"Are you sure I didn't?" He was in a bit of a nervous panic.



She smiled. '' Good.'' She snuggled her nose against his and out her arms around him.

"I still smell the gunpowder sometimes."

'' Then inhale my scent... so you can forget...''

"Can I forget?" He asked quietly.

'' I will do everything to make you forget...'' she answered quietly back. He leaned forward and molded his mouth over hers abruptly, just because he needed her right now. She inhaled sharp but kissed him back. His kisses... They were so passionate. He would contain himself, of course he would, but not just yet, just for a moment he needed to drop the mask. She placed a hand on head and hide in his hair to push him closer on her mouth. He was back...and hurt. And yet, he was still the man she loved so much.

"I missed you so much... I can't..." There were no words to say how much he missed her.

'' Me too...there are...'' she stopped talking and kissed him deep...''no...words... for it.'' He knew he needed to sleep more, but he wasn't sure how because of the situation. '' We can spend tomorrow the day here... I got an day off...''

"Ah... that's right... I don't... have patrols anymore..."

'' I am Captain for time being...'' she smiled.

"And... do you enjoy it...?"

'' Yes... maybe we can do it together.'' she smiled. '' I will be your assistance.''

"I think... I'm getting too old for these things."

'' As human maybe... but... you are a half demon... I need to say, more demon than human... Uncle Kazama said demons become very old. And that his age and your guys age is young.'' she smiled.

He set his hands on her upper arms and sighed, "It's... I'm not sure."

'' It's hard... that's why... have some rest, spend time with me, let's watch the beautiful things in life.''

"Alright..." he knew that he had to rest.

'' I will bring you tomorrow to a place... you will like it...and it quiet... and beautiful...'' she said. For a moment he wanted to say that it might be dangerous, before once more he realized there was no war. '' You will really like it... I will take something to drink and to eat with me...'' she said and touched his cheek.

"I suppose so..."

'' Now... Shall we lay back down?'' she asked while she stroke gentle his arms to keep him also a bit warm.

No. In truth he didn't want to, because he didn't want to risk falling asleep again, but instead of voicing that thought he nodded in agreement to her words.

' ' Want to snuggle a bit?' ' she asked. She was a bit worried, his face was so pale and in a fight... she wanted to comfort him.

"I'm fine."

She lay close to him and held him. ' ' Did I say that I am so happy you came back?' ' she said with a smile.

"I think you showed it just fine..."

She closed her eyes and relaxed. The owl was still present and calling from time by time. For the rest of that night however he didn't get anymore rest, he merely had to rest his eyes without sleeping. All the way until the burning sun started to rise and make his tired eyes ache even more. She had slept lightly and she woke up by the sun. She saw him, he was back. She brushed softly her lips over his, trying to wake him up carefully. He thought it best to pretend she woke him up, if she knew he hadn't slept longer she would worry.

' ' Morning...' ' she whispers. ' ' Are you ready for our trip or do you want to lay down for some rest? We got the whole day.' ' she smiled.

"I don't think I can stand for lying down for another minute."

' ' Let's dress then. No breakfast. I take the food with us.' ' she smiled.

"Alright." He rubbed at his eyes briefly, she could probably tell by how red his eyes were that he hadn't slept much, but it seemed she was willing to spare him.

' ' I never wore it...since I wanted you to be the first one to see me...' ' she said and stood up.

He glanced over at her. "What?"

' ' I saw it in a shop and bought it..' ' she said and put a box in front of him and showed a blue kimono with dragonflies on it. ' ' The blue is the same as your eye color.' ' she smiled

"I see..." There was no doubt he was interested in seeing her that way. She put her sleeping kimono off and put the other on with a yellow obi.

>She put her hair in a tail with a ribbon in it. And all the time he was watching her.<p>

' ' What do you think?' ' she asked.

"That you're beautiful, but then again you always are."

She gave him a bright smile. ' ' While you dress up and put something simple on, I will make breakfast for us to take with us.' '

"I'll help you." He slowly stood up and went through his things to find a comfortable kendo uniform, it was both simple and comfortable, but also fitting his more formal needs. He could always throw on their sky blue cloak on over it as well to make him feel more comfortable. She was waiting for him and when she was done, she went to the kitchen.

He finished dressing and picked up the cloak, it had been a long time since he had been able to wear it.

She had her own cloak as well and put it on the table and was putting rice in a bowl to warm up. "Want tofu as well?" she asked.

"If it won't trouble you too much..." His tone was quieter than usual.

"Of course not." she said with a faint smile. She prepared the tofu and vegetables as well. Without noticing she started to hum, being content.

He took a step forward and hugged her from behind, not too tight, so that she still had room to work, he didn't want to interfere too much.

>She smiled and keeps working on the dish. This is what she wished for...<p>

"I'm sorry for getting in the way, but right now... I just... need to be near you..."

"I don't mind it... It feels... wonderful..." she said while she was making rice balls.

"You two are up early." A voice commented from the door and Saito took a step away from her, briefly glancing at the source. Souji.

"We are going out." she said and placed a rice ball in the basket.

"Out...?" Souji looked curious.

"Yes." she said as she cleaned her hands to fill a bottle with the fresh made tea.

"Where to?"

"That is a surprise for Hajime." she said as she worked further on the food.

Souji merely smirked in response, his mind was conjuring up all sorts of nasty things no doubt. She finished the tofu dish and placed it also in the basket. She had made rice balls, a tofu dish and vegetables. She had fresh tea as well.

"It's one of those trips, is it?" Souji still looked a bit smug in the deduction.

"I don't know what you did with aunt Kosuzu but no. I want to show Hajime something beautiful after the war." she said seriously.

"Ah, there's no time for that sort of thing when you have kids.



Unfortunately. The little guy slept in our bed last night because he was afraid."

' ' We didn't do anything. We both were tired.' ' said Kiyomi. ' ' It was my father or uncle Kazama but not us.' '

Souji made a face. "It was Hijikata."

' ' What about me?' ' asked a voice.

"Your nightly activities." Souji stated, stepping aside in case he were interested in stepping into the kitchen.

' ' What about it?' ' he asked and look into the kitchen to see his daughter and fiancée and gave them a smile.

"Well it's giving my son nightmares that's all."

' ' Now you can understand how it was with my kids. And I wasn't the only one... ' ' said Hijikata, referring to his sister-in-law and her husband. ' ' But I admit, Chizuru was a bit loud.' '

"Now he admits it."

' ' So what? ' ' asked Hijikata.

Kiyomi was done and held Hajime's hand. ' ' Shall we go?' '

Saito snapped out of whatever thoughts he was having and shook his head. "Ah, yes..."

She left the kitchen with Saito without, she hoped, that they would be noticed by her father and Souji.

"Not to mention..." Souji added. "I think Shinpachi is still off with his dango shop girl."

Hijikata sighs. ' ' If this keeps up, we need to add more rooms.' '

Kiyomi looked back but she wasn't followed and sighs of being relieved. She walked through the city while holding Saito.

' ' I found this place on a day when I was strolling around. Father had a pissed mood because of Mamoru and uncle Heisuke. When I found it, I was enchanted by it.' '

"What were they doing this time?"

' ' Uncle Heisuke... took Mamoru to a bar and gave him sake. my brother was drunk when they arrived at home. It was late in the morning.' '

"That sounds like them."

' ' Yes.' ' They were at the gate of the town. ' ' It's near the town.' ' she smiled. ' ' And it is safe.' ' she assured. ' ' Now, close your eyes. I will guide you.' '

"Hmm..." He was a bit uneasy with that but if she really wanted he

would obey.

When she saw he had closed his eyes, she guided him. It was a short walk but they arrived. There was a hot spring that was surrounded by 50 maybe more cherry blossom trees. It was snowing petals and the ground was a blanket. '' You can open your eyes.'' she smiled.

He peeked one eye open firstly before the other. She placed the blanket she had took with her on the ground and placed the basket on it. He glanced around at the place carefully. It seemed unreal for some reason.

'' Beautiful...isn't?''

"It feels like a dream, rather than something real."

She look up to the blossoms. '' That was my reaction as well when I saw it for the first time.''

He kneeled near the blanket, lightly picking up one of the soft pink petals and feeling it between his fingers, just testing if it was real. She sat down on the blanket and was putting the food on the blanket. Still he was careful, lest it tear.

She stood up and walked to him. She found a cherry blossom intact and put it on his hair. '' My surprise...'' she smiled tender to him.

"It would look better on you I think."

'' Well, it makes you adorable.'' she chuckled.

"Hmm." He didn't quite smile, but her voice made him a bit more at ease.

'' Shall we start on our breakfast?''

"Yes." He glanced at it, wouldn't do to let it get cold when she worked so hard on it. She sat down and offered him a rice ball

He took it carefully. "Thank you for your hard work."

'' Everything for you.'' she smiled and took a rice ball and a bite. He definitely appreciated her cooking for him, more than he could express.

She filled his cup with tea and then her own. '' it's quiet...and beautiful...and so peaceful...''

"You are as well."

She look at him and smiled and placed a kiss on his cheek. His expression softened ever more while he watched her, he was most interested in paying attention to her. Every movement she made was interesting to him, it distracted him from troublesome thoughts. She picked up a tofu piece and offered it to his mouth. His gaze flicked to it before he yielded and took a bite, but his gaze didn't stay there and turned back to her again. She smiled softly, to see him here under the blossoms. For some reason he just couldn't bring himself to take his gaze off of her, he also had to hope she wasn't

quite noticing because she may think it's strange.

He moved closer to her then, really, he had been trying to not do this... She went closer as well and placed a hand on his cheek.

"I was trying to hold back..."

' ' Hold back? We did for four years...' '

"It wasn't difficult... considering we couldn't see one another..."

She smiled in his kiss. ' ' So we need to catch up a bit... You don't mind?' '

"Not if you don't... and only if..." He pressed her down so she was under him.

' ' No... I am not...' ' she said softly and put her arms around him.

He leaned down near her ear. "And only if... we're far enough away... that nobody will hear it... when I make you cry out my name..."

She swallowed...' ' Can you... do that?' '

"Can't I?"

' ' You can...' ' she smiled.

Except a thought crossed his mind, wait, had she had her tea today? Did she need that first? He didn't want to risk it...

' ' What is it?' ' she asked.

"Ahh... nothing" He furrowed his brow once more. He brushed his thumb over her lips lightly to silence her, he didn't want to talk about it. It only made him more fearful to do this. She closed her eyes so she felt better his touch on her lips. A quiet sigh left him and he felt like he really wasn't sure if he wanted to continue, but he focused on her feelings rather than his own. As long as she got what she needed it was fine, he just had to stop at the last minute for himself like last time and it should be fine.

' ' Your mind is somewhere else...' ' she said softly.

"I know. I'm sorry." She stroke her fingers over the strands of his hair and traced softly his nose and his lips. It... hurt her in a way that he was struggling with himself. He let out a sigh. "Sorry... just forget about it." He set a hand on her cheek lightly and leaned down to kiss her, but it was different.

She stared with half open eyes to him while she kissed him back. At this point he wasn't sure what to do. What could he do?

' ' Hey... what goes in that mind of yours...' ' she asked softly and touched his face.

"Just you..."

She pulled him close against her and snuggled her nose in his hair. Instead he just settled for resting against her. There was so much on his mind he just wasn't handling it well. She was stroking his back slowly while she watched the ceiling of pink. She pressed a long deep kiss on his head. Suddenly a sound caught his attention and he glanced up, a hand automatically reached for his blade, only to realize he hadn't bothered to bring it.

She gave him a short blade in a way that no one would see and herself brought a kunai close to her. He caught sight of white, no doubt it was a demon, but the thing already looked weak on the verge of death as it shuffled onwards through the trees, still a distance away. "It's best to kill it..."

' ' Yes.' ' she said.

He wasn't used to a short blade, but he prepared it and headed after the creature, maybe he could see where it went. She followed Saito with her kunai in her hand. He continued following the stumbling creature for sometime until it came to a point at the water's edge and collapsed into dust.

But that kicker was that there was a lot of dust around the edges of the water. "What is this?"

' ' I don't know...' ' said Kiyomi. ' ' But Kodo really failed. I am glad my mother is such a good doctor.'

He kneeled near the ash and glanced into the water. Something wasn't right here. "We should inform everyone of this and not allow people to drink out of this water..."

Kiyomi took a sample of it. ' ' Yes, and I let Mother check it.'

"They're all coming here before dying... but why?"

' ' It's not that big of a lake either...' ' said Kiyomi and look around.

"No." He slowly stood, handing the short weapon back to her. She took it back. "Let's get back and have a guard set up."

' ' Alright but you won't guard it. You need rest.' ' she said.

"I could handle it if need be."

' ' No... you need rest. You have seen so much bloodshed and death...' ' she said worried

"I'm a soldier... that's my responsibility."

She nodded. ' ' Let's return.. so we can warn them.'

He hurried along with her, they had to warn them something weird was going on. When they arrived, they gather everyone in the main room. Souji smirked at them when he saw them of course. It was very amusing to him.

' ' Hajime and I saw today something strange.'

"Strange? Hajime-kun don't tell me you lost something in the war."  
Souji said.

' ' Uncle Souji? really? They screamed yesterday the whole household together...' ' smirked Mamoru.

' ' Shush it, monkey.' ' said Kiyomi and went to her mother and gave the bottle. ' ' I took a sample. All the ferals were gathering at a lake and..died.' ' explained Kiyomi. ' ' The dust was in the water too.' '

Chizuru was thinking deeply.

' ' Kodo failed to make the water of life. And since he disappeared... the ferals are dying one by one.' ' said Chizuru.

' ' What about us?' ' asked Heisuke.

' ' You guys won't die. Otherwise... Toshizo...' ' said Chizuru but she couldn't say it, losing Hijikata...was a very painful though. Hijikata pulled her into a hug.

' ' Otherwise I was gone already.' ' he said. ' ' But we need to guard the place.' '

Souji glanced at Saito, though, it didn't seem as though he'd done anything, his uniform was still in perfect order. No stains or anything.

' ' Keep talking, I will check the sample.' ' said Chizuru as she went to her room.

' ' Where is this lake?' ' asked Hijikata. ' ' Outside the village, to the west...' ' said Kiyomi.

"Hajime-kun, mind if I get a word in after?" Souji asked, wanting to get in some real good words on what went on.

"No." Saito had no interest because he knew what Souji wanted to know.

"I'll ask Kiyomi then." Souji winked.

' ' if you are looking for details... You won't get them.' ' she said.

"We'll see." Souji said.

Saito abruptly leaned over with a wince, Souji caught the faint glint of red in his eyes before Saito quickly got up and left. Souji slowly stood up and walked out the door, but by the time he was out there he didn't know which way Saito went off to.

Kiyomi stood up as well and followed them but found only Souji. ' ' He should have told me...' '

"Hmm, didn't he get enough when you two were busy at it at your little picnic?"

Kiyomi leans against the wall and looked down. '' I failed to make him forget...the painful thoughts...''

"What do you mean?" Souji actually looked confused.

'' I... One moment he was so passionate with me...and then... fear is over whelming him again... He also keeps asking if I drink my tea...''

"Ah... that... it's because... Hajime-kun is afraid the same thing that happened to his sister will repeat itself with you. She died from her pregnancy." Souji stated.

Now she remembered. '' I see. Now I remember.'' she said and the ground became wet. '' I can understand his fear... because I am afraid of losing him too...'' she sniffed softly. '' ... I really want a family with him on day...Uncle Souji...''

"He doesn't seem to recall all the disease over there from lack of food. The New Government doesn't run things very well." Souji sighed. "Well... you could always force him... or get him drunk." Souji smiled while saying it, finding that thought amusing.

She nodded no. '' No... '' she said. '' I am going to take a walk...'' she said softly.

"Do you want me to come with you?" Souji asked. She nodded. Even he was a tease, he was a good man as well. "Alright. Where to?"

'' Somewhere in town...'' she said and walked slowly off.

Souji followed along with her. "Hmm, however it goes try not to worry so much, things will turn out."

'' I... told him clearly...it won't happen so long as I take that stuff.'' she said. '' Today... I saw his struggles...in his eyes... I felt so... helpless.''

"I think you'll have to push him. Even if it's unpleasant for him."

'' Ido-..'' -'' Excuse me? Can you help me?'' asked a soft female voice and Kiyomi turned around, seeing a lady there, a beautiful one. She almost looked like her mother.

Souji raised a brow at the lady. "Hey, sometimes you have to hurt the person you love to make them not hurt. Anyways... who do we have here? Looks familiar. Do we know you?"

'' I-I don't think so. My name is Kaoru Nagumo. I am looking for the Sakura Inn. I am here to visit my sister.'' said the lady.

'' We can bring you there.'' said Kiyomi, offering her help.

"I knew you'd say that." Souji said.

'' We are here to help people, uncle Souji.''

Souji merely sighed. "I know, I know."

' ' Come miss Koaru.' ' said Kiyomi and Koaru followed.

Souji sighed yet again and rubbed the back of his head. How inconvenient for them. She gave him a faint smile. They walked slowly to the inn.

' ' Shall we take a short cut between those houses?' ' asked Kiyomi to Souji.

"No, better to stay on the street. You know what kind of slimy things like to lurk in dark allies."

' ' That's true.' ' she said. Then they arrived at the Inn.

' ' Thank you for your kindness. But you should cover up more.' ' said Koaru to Kiyomi. Souji looked startled by the comment.

' ' Cover up? I always walk like this.' ' said Kiyomi.

' ' Oh mai...' ' said Koaru. ' ' A young lady like you... I am sorry! It is not my business to meddle in your life.' ' she apologized.

Souji coughed into his hand once to interrupt them. "Since we're here..."

Koaro bowed. ' ' Thank you for your help.' ' she said and walked inside.

Meanwhile Kaoru went in a room. ' ' I saw her, Kodo-san. Such a pretty granddaughter. I am jealous.' '

"Is it so? Does she appear to be... of pureblood indeed?" The dark man questioned, glaring down on his hostage he had taken, that so kindly wandered alone through the town wearing those blue colors.

Shinpachi spat out some curses at them through the cloth stuffed into his mouth, still struggling to get out of the binds.

' ' Yes. There is no mistake she is the daughter of Chizuru and the Vice-Commander Hijikata Toshizo. And even... a beautiful pure-blood.' '

"So it is truth then... my daughter... has created a true demon from a half one... their daughter... she must be the key to this puzzle I have so long sought..." Kodo slowly turned around. "We must take her."

' ' There are two others... her brother... and their nephew... also from half demons. But it seems a female blood is more pure... a maiden...' '

"Yes, it makes perfect sense... we must have her..."

Shinpachi kicked at Kodo's feet, glaring and cursing him for all he was worth.

' ' I will look what I can do for you.' ' said Koaru.

"See that you do."

Koaru bowed and smiled evil to Shinpachi before he left the room.

\* \* \*

><p>The battle continues next chapter...<p>

A/N \*scream of terror\* Kodo wants Kiyomi!

## 9. The Evil Mastermind Attacks!

Disclaimer: We do not own Hakuoki.

Title: Sweet and Bitter

>Category: AnimeManga » Hakuoki

>Authors: Mrs. Hijikata and Yu<br>Language: English

>Rating: Rated: M<br>Genre: Hurt/Comfort/Romance

>Published:<p>

\*\*\_Red Rose Inc. Presents...\_\*\*

\*\*\_Sweet and Bitter

><em>\*\*

\*\*\_Starring Mrs. Hijikata as Hijikata Toshizo\_\*\*

><strong><em>And<em>\*\*

><strong><em>Yu starring as Saito Hajime<em>\*\*

\*\*\_Additional characters also played by Mrs. Hijikata and Yu

><em>\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Souji and Kiyomi arrived back at home as Chizuru walked to Kiyomi. '' Can you get some sugar and fresh vegetables from the market?'' she asked and Kiyomi nodded.<p>

Kiyomi walked to the shops and bought what was needed. She saw Koaru next to her. '' Oh hello.'' said Koaru.

'' Hello.'' said Kiyomi.

'' I bought food for my sister... but I don't remember anymore where she lives.'' said Koaru in a apologizing way.

'' where does she live?'' asked Kiyomi.

'' North district.'' said Koaru.

'' I will guide you.'' said Kiyomi.

Kiyomi was walking with Koaru through the city and Koaru went to a alleyway. Kiyomi turned around and followed her. When she came around the corner, she was hit from behind and she fell down, light's out. Koaru smirked and lift the girl up.



Saito slowly turned into a darkened alleyway to try and get away from it if only for a moment and there he rested against the back of a building, trying to gather himself, because he knew he had to return home.

Except the low hissing sound he heard alerted him to danger and his hand went to his blade.

He stumbled further into the alleyway, narrowly avoiding the sharp claws of the giant mutant that was chasing him down. It was hard to get a good hit into the beast, despite all his cleaving at it and he was forced to run it through the maze like allies.

He turned one corner and waited, waited for those heavy footsteps to get closer and then he sliced low, taking out a leg and sending the creature crashing down, where he raised his blade and brought it down into the creature's eye socket into it's skull.

Saito let out a breath, panting heavily and flicking his blade clean of blood, before he started back towards the street, at least until he heard more footsteps. More ferals, but these ones didn't seem mutated yet.

He drew another breath, having difficult breathing in the scent of blood and started forward, slicing through several of them with ease. He thought he would have to just retreat back where he had help, because they kept coming... except to his dismay it seemed some of these things were mere villagers forced to be beasts.

He started to back up, almost to the street when a gun went off and he dropped to a knee, grabbing at the side of his face he felt his own warm blood slipping between his fingers into the dirt below him.

Slow footsteps approached him and suddenly he felt a hand grab at his hair and pull his head up.

"You'll live... won't you?"

"You're... Kodo..." Saito gritted his teeth, his eye stung unbelievably bad and Kodo smirked at the obvious pain.

"You're my insurance she'll do as I command." Kodo stated and Saito looked confused, not having any idea what was going on. "Take him!"

As Kodo turned his back Saito reached for his blade again, despite the burning eye he picked it from the ground and stood. "Whatever it is you're up to... I'll stop you..."

Kodo merely snapped his fingers for his creations to do the work and they moved forward, leaving Saito to wear himself out by fighting a seemingly endless amount of these feral demons.

"Do you feel ill?" Kodo asked him, holding up one of the silver bullets. "You should... you see... these ones are special... they're hollow... and on the inside, little silver specks. Once the bullet enters, it opens up, releasing those specks... slowly poisoning you from the inside. Lucky for you... it only grazed you, but the specks still scattered into the wound and... well... you can probably feel

the burn in your eye already. Looks quite terrible might I say..."

Saito refused to give in, despite slowly becoming more and more weary as the fight with the creatures went on and he finally slowed down in his movements. Doing is best to give a strong swing, but that swing was too easily blocked and he felt a cheap shot hit him in the back. He hit the ground and his sword skitted across the ground.

"Now... bring him home with us." Though Kodo smirked when Saito was still reaching for his weapon and slowly Kodo walked over and pressed a foot down on Saito's hand. "Enough... you've already lost." The half demons grabbed him and started to drag him, while Kodo picked up his sword. "Interesting."

Koaru had bind up Kiyomi's hands and feet together and a cloth in her mouth. She woke up slowly and saw a darkroom she didn't recognized. Shinpachi yelled at the top of his lungs at Koaru, but not much came out. So they had gotten away with it and got Kiyomi! These bastards, Shinpachi was sure to make them pay once he got lose. Kiyomi heard Shinpachi and what to call him but noticed her mouth was stuffed as well.

' ' What a beautiful girl... When Kodo comes back... you will do what he says otherwise...' ' smirked Kaoru. ' ' You will lose something dear to you.' ' Kiyomi her eyes went wide.

Koaru smirked as he wiped his small knife off from blood with his tongue. He had cut her cheek to taste her blood. " Sweet... very sweet... yet, something strange is tasting.' ' he said. He didn't know what but it was Saito's blood she still had. It seems he didn't know she had mated Saito.

Kodo returned with his small army, dragging along Saito like he was nothing more than a worthless sack of potatoes.

"Ah... Koaru you've done it... excellent work."

' ' hhhmmhhh...' ' Kiyomi tried to call Saito when she saw him.

Kodo kneeled near her. "Don't scream now... or I'll have to do worse to him." He removed the cloth in her mouth. "Dear granddaughter, don't you know who I am?"

She glared at him. ' ' I have no idea. I only know, let them go.' ' she said.

"Now why would I do that? He's my insurance policy."

' ' Insurance?' ' she asked.

"That you'll do everything I ask of you." Kodo replied.

Kiyomi look at him. ' ' What do you want from me that you need to hurt.. Uncle Shinpachi and Uncle Saito?' ' she tried to protect them, especially Saito to call him uncle again.

"You see..." Kodo began, standing up and pacing. "somehow... your mother somehow was able to create a true demon from a half one... you... you are the key to unlocking the answers of how to make my

army unstoppable..."

Hey eyes became filled with rage. '' I will not bear anything!'' she hissed.

"I thought you would say that..." Kodo loaded his pistol once more and pressed it into Saito's stomach. "If you don't... I'll have to pull the trigger..."

Hey eyes became wide and looked down. '' I... I will...' she said. '' Just don't hurt him. Don't hurt Hajime...' she said. '' Oh mai, Kodo-san. Your granddaughter has eyes on a older man.''

Saito suddenly grabbed the pistol and slowly brought the barrel up below his chin. "If you do decide to shoot me... you better make sure to kill me... no matter what... Kiyomi don't do... what he asks you... duty... outweighs personal feelings..."

'' No! Hajime!'' she called and she cried softly. '' Hajime... please... get away from the pistol.''

Kodo stepped back. "Then I assume you'll do what I ask of you."

Koaru smirked and walked to Kiyomi and undo her kimono and saw her body,hidden by her bandaged chest and undergarment. '' Look at this... It seems my sister and brother-in-law... knows how to do it.' Kiyomi gave him a death glare.

"Leave her alone... or I'm going to kill you slowly instead of quickly..." Saito stated and Kodo laughed in amusement.

"He's in no position to make threats."

Koaru smirked and undo Kiyomi's bandages from her chest and stuffed it in her mouth. The tears were rolling down on her cheeks. Shinpachi meanwhile was trying his best to get out of his bindings, so hard his wrists had begun to bleed from ropes rubbing so much.

Koaru put her undergarments off. '' Let's see what you have to offer.' he said and placed his hands between her legs. Kiyomi literally yelled through her throat. '' What? Kodo! She is not a virgin anymore!'' said Koaru.

That pushed Saito over the edge and he let out a snarl like an angry tiger and slammed his body weight into one of the ferals, and grabbed the other one, sinking his teeth into it's throat and ripping out a large piece of flesh in his struggle to tear Koaru apart.

Koaru tried to get advance and undid his belt. Kiyomi was overwhelmed by fear that her hair became white and her eyes golden and a release of energy came free that she pushed Koaru hard against the wall.

Kodo held a hand over his eyes, wincing at the energy, but all he had to do was put the gun so it was aimed at Kiyomi and Saito froze, unable to take another step forward.

"That... is quite enough..." Kodo indeed seemed displeased. "You... you've already had her?" This put a dent in his plans. "No matter..."

so long as she is not pregnant... it will not interfere with my plans. She will breed the next generation. An army. And our clan will be restored." Kodo stated and Saito clenched his fists, he wasn't going to let it happen.

Koaru stood up and walked back to Kiyomi. '' try it again and your boyfriend is dead meat.'' he said and leaned over her. Kiyomi closed her eyes when she felt his... over her leg and she cried silently.

"If you think I'll let you do that to her... you're wrong..." Saito said, daringly taking a step forward, because there was no way that Kodo would shoot Kiyomi... he needed her. Kiyomi nodded no to Saito because Kodo would change his mind and shoot him.

"If you need to..." Saito briefly glanced away. "if he needs to do that to someone do it to me, but leave her alone."

Kodo burst into laughter of amusement. "Look at this one... I think the rumors were true."

Kiyomi cried softly and nodded no again.

"If the only way to protect her is to offer myself then I'll do so." Saito replied, because he doubted these kind of people cared what they did with who. "Aside from that... an army from her... would take so many years..."

Saito took another step forward and Kodo turned the gun at him. "I'm a purebreed oni, I have all the time in the world to wait to spawn one."

Kiyomi managed to spit her bandage out. '' Kill him and I bite my tongue off!.'' she threatened.

"We would get some silence then." Kodo smirked.

'' And you call yourself a doctor? If I bite my tongue off, I bleed to death...'' she said.

"You're an oni. It will heal."

"Neither of you sons of bitches move." Shinpachi said, with the blood on the ropes it made it slick enough for him to escape and he'd grabbed a rifle from the wall stand and held it aimed directly at Kodo. "I got training like you said Saito."

Kiyomi look at him. '' Uncle Shinpachi...''

Saito quickly picked up the rifle from the feral he had killed and the ferals, which were about to attack were forced to stop under Kodo's command. Koaru vanished quickly from the room. He had escaped. Kiyomi sniffed and tried to free herself.

"Damnit!" Shinpachi cursed and just as he pulled the trigger Kodo threw down a smoke bomb.

Kiyomi held her breath and closed her eyes, A hand grasped at her shoulder then. She gave a short yell.

"It's alright... it's me..." Saito pulled her into his arms.

Kiyomi look at him before she started to cry, her hands still tied on her back. He used the bayonet on the rifle to cut them quickly, he felt horribly guilty that he hadn't been able to do something sooner.

When she was free she held him tightly. '' I want to go home...''

He lifted her up and carried her out, squinting on one side as he started out the door and Shinpachi slowly covered their flank as he backed out, keeping the gun aimed at the room.

Kiyomi shivered and took a lick from the cut above his eye. '' Your blood...''

"Be careful... it might harmful for you." He said quietly, stumbling a little bit. He didn't know how long he could keep upright. He didn't know what that silver would do if ingested.

'' When we are home, you will drink my blood to clean yourself.'' she said.

"Shinpachi... please take her..." Saito requested... he couldn't carry her much further, his strength was gone. Shinpachi set the rifle aside and took Kiyomi from his arms.

"Lean on me then. I can get you both home." Shinpachi replied.

'' I can walk... don't worry. Take Hajime... He shouldn't move...'' said Kiyomi.

"Just stay still." Shinpachi told her, still carrying her while Saito slowly trailed behind them. There wasn't another choice, Saito was too prideful, he wouldn't lean on anyone. Shinpachi glanced back at Saito and winced, he seemed like he was getting slower. Surely one of their patrols had to be around somewhere?

Mamoru was on patrol when he saw them. '' Uncle Shinpachi! What happened?!''

"We were attacked." Shinpachi stated. "It's Kodo and some other creep."

'' Hajime? Are you alright?'' asked Mamoru, seeing him. '' Give my sister to me and carry Hajime, uncle Shinpachi, if he like it or not.''

"Don't dare touch me." Saito warned.

Mamoru wanted to open his mouth buy Kiyomi stopped him. '' No time to argue. Hajime need to drink quickly my blood and needs a treatment of my mother.''

"I'm fine. There's no reason to worry. This is nothing more than a few scratches."

They walked quickly home. When they arrived Hijikata went quickly to Kiyomi's room where she was. She had a blanket around her. Chizuru was checking Hajime. Saito refused to be swayed by any sort of

injury, instead he clenched his fists over his knees, he felt guilty he hadn't stopped that bastard in time before he touched her inappropriately. He wouldn't forgive himself.

Chizuru gave a cleaning potion to him. '' This should clean your veins and body.'' said Chizuru. Hijikata look at Kiyomi and touched her head.

>'' Are you hurt somewhere?'' he asked.<p>

'' No... I am fine.'' she said softly.

Saito though had a guilty look on his face still. He had yet to forgive such a terrible mistake on his part, allowing it to happen. He glanced at the potion and took it slowly, but still he felt however long he hurt was well deserved for being a failure.

'' Do you need anything?'' asked Hijikata. Chizuru gave Kiyomi her tea and another another potion to relax more.

'' No, I want to be alone with Hajime. I want to hold him...'' she said.

Everyone left the room. Kiyomi crawled to Saito... and lay against his chest. He had yet to say a word.

'' We were in a hard situation...'' she said. '' I...I was scared...that I would lose you...''

He glanced away, not wanting to say more. What should he do in this situation? Could he even make her feel better?

'' I love you, Hajime...'' she whispers.

"I didn't get to protect you..."

'' I couldn't protect you... You are hurt as well...'' she said and touched a bandage on his body.

"This is a different kind of hurt..."

'' But it still hurts...'' she said softly and plant a kiss on his cheek. '' And you wanted to protect me... I saw it... You did your best...''

"I sat helplessly..." His fists clenched even tighter against his knees.

'' You...you can make it... better...'' she said softly.

"How...?"

'' Touch me...were he touched...'' she said. '' I only want you to touch me in that way.'' For a long moment he was silent before he hesitantly set a hand on her thigh, it somehow made sense, but also didn't, but if she said it would make her feel better...'' Please... get his touch away...'' she said softly.

He placed his hand there, keeping his gaze on hers, if it would get rid of that, replace that bastard's touch with his... then he would

do whatever it took. She kept looking at him and sighs, this was how it should be... Only Saito was the one for her. Briefly he glanced at the door while shifting closer. Hopefully they wouldn't bother them. Her chest was raising a bit faster and she placed a hand on his chest.

' ' Itoshii...' she whispers and lay her head on his shoulder. His eyes lowered a little bit and he pulled her into his lap, it hurt badly to do so, but he wouldn't dare show it. ' ' Hajime...' she said softly and look at him with a gentle look.

"I'll make sure that it's just a bad memory that will fade... once we've killed him."

She snuggled her nose against his. ' ' I don't want to be used... as a ...cow... to give birth...' '

"I won't let that happen..." Despite the fact of changing into a clean uniform, the white of his shirt slowly started to stain red even through the bandages.

' ' Hajime...' she said and look a bit scared.

"What is it?" He moved his hand away from her, thinking he'd bothered her. She touched the stained bandages and the tops of her fingers were red. She shed some tears... and look at him. She moved close with her neck near his face.

' ' Please...I beg you... please...you need to...drink...' '

"I'm fine. It will heal soon."

' ' Please...' she said and lean her head on his shoulder. ' ' Let me take care of you like you do to me. Please...' '

He sighed and drew his shorter blade then, pressing the tip to her shoulder, just lightly to draw a little blood, just barely prick the skin before dropping it to the side and bringing his mouth over the cut.

She tighten her arms around him. ' ' That's it...' she said and leans her head against his. ' ' Let me take care of you.' ' she said softly, showing the deep love she had for him. Deep down he had indeed been starving for it, but he had felt she had a much more difficult time than he had and he didn't want to bother her, he wanted to fight the feeling. ' ' So long as I am with you, I am not afraid.' ' she said and stroking his hair.

He hoped this would heal just as quickly, but he wondered if he could get back to his duties on time or not. If not just waht would he do? She felt he was mulling again. She closed her eyes. She wished she could help him... if he would accept it. His right eye was still squinted from the injury and the silver powder that had gotten into it, but at least the potion eased some of his pain.

' ' Hajime... I am not helping you at all, aren't I? I keep pushing things...' ' she said softly.

"Pushing...?"

' ' Pushing to drink from me. Pushing you to answer the questions I have.' '

"Do you think it bothers me?"

' ' In a way it does. You've got a lot on your mind... While I was sitting save here, you fought for your life everyday...'

"If it bothered me I wouldn't remain with you."

She hugged him. ' ' I wish... I could ease your pain ... but I don't know how...'

"You already do."

She pressed her lips on his. ' ' I am going to clean those bandages.' '

"If I let you..." He pressed her down on her back and leaned over her. "I still have yet to do as you've requested..."

She look at him, how his hair was hanging above her... his deep blue eyes... Her hand went up and stroke his cheek and slowly his lips.

>Everyday, she fell in love with him... "Do you still want your request?"<p>

' ' Yes... but be careful.' ' she said and placed her hand on the bandage. ' ' I belong to you and only.' '

"A little blood won't kill me."

She smiled faintly and went forward to kiss him. He kissed her back and stayed near her. He would use his guilty feelings to try and make her feel better. She snuggled careful against him while she kept kissing him softly. She stroke her thumb softly over his cheek.

She rolled on her side and faced him. ' ' If we lay like this... I...I w-want it away...' ' she inhaled deep and shivered, showing what she though of that bastards touch. ' ' Get it away...'

"Like this?"

' ' Yes, we can move slow so it won't hurt you... and we can relax together... while at it...'

"... alright... because I also... want his touch off of you..."

' ' Then...erase it...'

He reached a hand onto her hip and pulled her leg over his. "I will... until you don't even remember anymore..."

She nodded yes and lean her head on his and put a arm around him. ' ' Ready when you are...' ' she whispers.

He briefly reached a hand between them. "Are you sure you're...?"

' ' Yes, I am sure...'



In truth he was still a bit afraid, but his need to comfort her and take away that guy's touch was more important to him. Besides she still had her tea... he leaned into her neck, placing kisses all along it and her shoulder while his hands trailed over her side, down her hip and along her inner thigh. A soft sigh escaped her lips as her hand trailed over his back and the other hand was holding his waist, making circles over it. Nothing more that she wanted that the disgusting touch of the guy would be erased. He placed a hand over her again, more intent on touching her this time.

She swallowed a gasp and made a sigh of it. It was different... Saito was so careful.. so sweet and loving... He shifted a little bit, trying to get himself comfortable. She was searching for his lips and found them, licking carefully his bottom lip. He groaned quietly and pressed closer to her. His groan gave her goosebumps on her arms, no doubt he would feel it. She kissed him passionate and her hand went slowly down and only placed her hand on it. She gave a deep side when she felt it and made a small sound. It made him inhale sharply to have her touch him. He waited for a long moment and when he felt it was alright he pressed his fingers into her. There, he could replace that person's touch.

' ' ..Ah...' ' she moaned softly and pants softly. She didn't know if he was alright if it, but she made a small friction with her hand while she kissed hi jawline. It only made him work harder at distracting her, taking a deep breath he swallowed with difficulty and picked up the pace.

she pants softly over his skin... It felt nice..and right. ' ' Ha...ji...me...' '

"Tell me what you want."

' ' You.. I want you...' '

He moved his hand away and lightly brushed hers from him before he pulled her hips into his abruptly. There was no time to wait for him. She whimpers from pleasure and buried her face into the hole of his neck. This position made them so close...

"You're mine. Nobody else will touch you."

' ' Ooh Hajime...' ' she moans softly.

For the door...Kosuzu was standing with some food but changed her mind and went back to the others who were talking.

' ' So Kiyomi... And she is so calm...' ' sighs Hijikata. ' ' And Hajime or you couldn't stop it before it happen?' ' asked Hijikata to Shinpachi.

Shinpachi held out a wrist. "I'm sorry... Hijikata... I tried my best..."

Chizuru went right awya to check. ' ' You should have told me.' ' she said to Shinpachi.

Mamoru was pissed. ' ' So a dude who claimed that he was my uncle touched my sister in a disgusting way? I will kill him!'

Kosuzu came in with flushed cheeks and sat next to Souji.

Souji was too concerned with current events to notice. "I should have gone with her shopping..."

' ' We should ask Kiyomi.' ' said Sanosuke.

' ' Yea, I will do that.' ' said Mamoru.

' ' N-no, let them rest first...' ' said Kosuzu. Her nephew didn't need to hear what they were doing.

"They're asleep already?" Souji asked, but then he noticed the look on her face and frowned. How could he do that considering what happened to her?

Kosuzu nodded. ' ' Hearing the story from Shinpachi... Both wanted to protect each other...' '

Shinpachi sighed, he felt bad because he wasn't able to do something sooner as well.

Osen was thinking. ' ' So our father wanted to use his granddaughter to create an army. What is he thinking?'

"Disgusting bastard was going to... do it himself..."

Shinpachi scowled. Chizuru's stomach turned upside down and Hijikata clenched his fist that his knuckles became white.

' '...that guy that says he is a brother of Osen and Chizuru...' '  
Shinpachi glanced away. Hijikata sighs and look at the group. ' ' All of you, keep an eye on my daughter. If she wants to go outside. someone need to be with her.' '

"I'll be there." Souji assured, he had to make up for his mistake of not accompanying her a second time.

' ' Both must be scared terrible about losing each other... isn't Shinpachi?'

"Yea..." Shinpachi nodded.

"And this on top of his other fear..." Souji crossed his arms.

' ' Which other fear?' ' asked Hijikata.

"Mmm..." Souji sighed. "Don't say I said anything, but he's afraid of having children... for her sake, because of what happened with his sister."

Hijikata hide his face behind his hand and sighs deep.

' ' But there were diseases and the stress about the war on the mainland.' ' said Chizuru.

"I know." Soji replied, still keeping the same serious look on his face.

' ' For now...dismissed. I need time for my own.' ' said Hijikata and

stood up.

Meanwhile Kiyomi was kissing Saito's neck and played with his ear. A sigh left him and he turned her over onto her back, despite what she said he needed to be over her, to feel all of her completely against him. To feel his warmth over her and his soft touch, he was careful with her and with himself so she put her arms around him and kissed his neck gentle. He was washing away the dirty feelings of someone else who dare to touch her.

"I promise nobody else will get that close to you ever again."

She softly kissed his ear. '' Are you sure you can... lay like this?'' she asked for sure.

"Mmmm... I can only think of you right now." He answered, glancing at her carefully.

'' Hajime..'' she said softly and pulled him to her.

He let out a shuddery breath and rested his head against hers. Nothing else really mattered to him, and he remained careful and slow, there was no need to rush this. No need at all. The only thing that was important was being in her arms like this, as close as humanly possible. She pants softly and moved slowly with him. Follow him... and cherish his love for her. He was her lover, her partner. No one else. No one else could capture her heart like he did. He rested his body over hers, making sure he was able to have all of her against him, he would accept nothing less. She whimpered. His warmth.. the scent of his sweat mixed with tofu... his hot breathing. So...it felt so wonderful.

He brushed his fingertips along her cheek and leaned down even more, pressing his lips along her neck. "I love you."

She leaned in his touch. '' I love you too.''

She kissed him softly and placed her hand through his hair. As much as he wanted it to stay this way... it probably wouldn't last too much longer. Then again he couldn't move too quick when his body was still aching from pushing it too far. At least being with her gave him a temporary energy boost.

He moved a bit the other way and a moan escaped her lips. '' Hajime.. don't... if you do that...I...I will.''

"And... you don't want to...?" He questioned, lips grazing her ear with each word he spoke deliberately slowly.

'' ...'' she moaned again. Kiyomi kissed Saito deep and inhaled deeply every time again. '' So close... '' whispers Kiyomi and held him tightly against her.

Saito nodded briefly, he could always tell when she was, it always led him to his own end. She buried her face in his neck... and even bit him slightly... playing with his skin. This time... he didn't intend to pull away. He couldn't.

'' Ha...ji...me...'' she groaned and start to arch her back already a bit.

He set a hand along her back when she did, pulling her closer against himself. Her chest was raising more and more, followed by her soft moans. He felt a little pressure on the wound above his eye and hide his face against her shoulder so that she wouldn't see it was bothering him, a few drops of blood dripped onto her shoulder and the pillow regardless. She look up when she felt it and licked it away, cleaning his wound and she sighs. His blood...was warm and full of adrenaline...

"You feel too good..." He breathed deeply and moved a hand between them to help her along, since he probably couldn't continue this for much longer, even if he wanted to.

Her hands scratch his back as she arched her back now full and tighten. '' Hajime!'' He inhaled deeply, this time staying with her and not pulling away, giving her what she had so badly wanted from him the first time. She kissed his cheek. '' I love you...' ' she whispers.

She snuggled closely against him and closed her eyes. '' Will you stay with me while I am going to sleep?''

"I have no intention of leaving your side."

She smiles and rest her head against his chest. He rubbed at his eyes and laid his head against the pillow, but otherwise didn't move away from her. From the events what happened, she was fast asleep. Yet, she didn't released Saito at all. For a long few moments he was left in deep thought about the situation, in truth...

Hijikata was in the garden, thinking. His little girl... He really wanted to kill the guy... Just then it seemed Kazama was returning from another ocean patrol, bag of gear slung over his shoulder. He had no idea anything that had happened. Hijikata took a cup of sake he had.

"Isn't it a bit early in the evening?" Kazama questioned, noticing the drink.

'' I need to calm down, Chikage.'' he said.

"Did you fight with my sister in law again? You should know your place. She is always right."

'' I wish that would have happened...' ' said Hijikata with a sigh. '' Something has happened...to... Shinpachi, Hajime and...Kiyomi.' '

"... my niece?" Of course he didn't give a damn about Shinpachi and Saito, but Kiyomi was his niece. "I demand answers."

'' Kodo... kidnapped them.. and.. There was a guy as well who said he was the brother of Chizuru and Osen. Kodo had the idea.. to use Kiyomi as... demon to breed a whole army. The guy...he... undressed Kiyomi in presence of Saito and Shinpachi... who couldn't do a thing... and... the guy... touched her...there... with his ... hand...' '

"..." There was a spark of yellow in his eyes and Kazama looked ready

to explode. "I will kill them... those worthless mutts... why didn't they stop them?!"

' ' Shinpachi was tied up and they placed a gun to Hajime's head in front of Kiyomi! Kodo discovered that Chizuru gave birth to pure oni's while she slept with a halfbreed, me! Kodo wanted to try it out. Hajime did what he could.'

"They clearly didn't do enough!"

' ' They tried. And they could save each other but that happened... no one wanted it to happen, no one! But what would you do, if they put a gun against Osen her head with the finger on the trigger? Kiyomi was scared she would lose him.'

"I would kill them before they even got that close."

' ' Toshizo.. Chikage, welcome home.' ' said Chizuru. ' ' Toshizo.. Hajime's blood... I saw he was shot and checked his blood, it was filled with silver.' ' she said and Hijikata sighs.

' ' If I get Kodo in my hands...' ' he growled.

"I'll will have him first..." Kazama turned around, he was going to go out scouting.

' ' Chikage-kun... Do you know...if Osen and I have a brother?' ' asked Chizuru.

Kazama stopped. "You were not aware? I had thought Kodo would have informed you."

' ' No, he did not. And I don't evenw ant to call him a brother...not when he...hurt Kiyomi.'

"I will make sure it is the last mistake they ever make." Kazama assured.

She nodded. ' ' Thank you, brother.' ' said Chizuru. Hijikata took another cup of sake. ' ' I am going to check Kiyomi and Hajime. Maybe they want dinner.' ' said Chizuru.

"I will let you know if I hear news of their whereabouts."

Chizuru gave a peck on Kazama's cheek and walked to Kiyomi's room.

Hijikata stared at wall. ' ' Kiyomi was so quiet when they returned.'

Kazama glanced over his shoulder at Hijikata.

' ' She only wanted to go to her room. We heard from Shinpachi what happened.'

"I see..."

' ' Hajime is now with her. He take care of her.'

"He had better."

' ' Do I need to give Osen a message from you?' ' asked Hijikata.

Chizuru knocked carefully on the door. ' ' Kiyomi... Mom is here.' '

"Yes. Tell her I'm hunting."

' ' Alright.' ' said Hijikata. Chizuru open the door and saw them and smiled faintly. Kiyomi was sleeping and sticking like a riceball at Hajime.

Saito had yet to fall asleep, but he didn't let it known he wasn't asleep. The blankets were up until their shoulders. Chizuru smiled, it reminded her of Toshizo and herself. She pets Kiyomi and felt of Saito had a fever just in case. Saito slowly peeked an eye open, but he didn't speak so he didn't wake Kiyomi.

Chizuru gave him a smile. ' ' Dinner will be soon. You two need to eat something.' ' she whispers.

He nodded slowly. "I'll let her sleep just a little longer."

She nodded and placed a kiss on his head. ' ' Thank you.' ' she said and stood up.

He glanced briefly at Kiyomi, just a few moments longer. Chizuru left the room and called Kosuzu and Osen to make dinner and warn the others to join the main room. He brushed his lips over her cheek in a lingering kiss, he would wake her carefully... he didn't know what type of dreams she might have. He didn't want to startle her.

Her cheeks curled up in a smile. ' ' Hajime...' ' she whispers.

He moved a bit lower along her cheek, placing another kiss there. "Dinner will soon be ready..."

' ' I see.' ' she answered and snuggled closer. ' ' Hajime... I love you.' ' she said softly.

"I love you too."

She placed a kiss on his lips and sat up. ' ' I slept well, thanks to you. It was so save...' '

"I'm glad."

She picked up her undergarments and Saito's as well and gave it to him. He picked up his jacket before he recalled it had been torn and he would need to stitch it before wearing it again. So he set it aside with a sigh and settled for his shirt and vest, as formal as he could manage.

' ' Hajime... Why not wearing.. something simple?' ' she asked and too out the closet his old kimono and smiled softly.

"Mmm, that, I had thought I got rid of it when I took up a western uniform."

' ' Mother kept all the old clothing. When I saw yours... I took it.' ' she smiled.

"It isn't quite practical anymore."

' ' In free time does.' ' she said and picked her own kimono, a soft purple one.

He reeled a little, looking in shock for just a moment, because once again he had forgotten that the war was over.'

' ' Show me... I never saw you wearing a kimono before...'

"Never?" He thought for a long moment. "I'll wear something traditional then... but I would prefer hakama just in case I need to fight." After what happened, he wanted to be ready at all times.

She smiled and look in the closet and found his Hakama and Haori and gave it to him.

' ' DINNER IS READY!' ' called Osen.

He took them carefully and redressed himself in it, it did feel a bit like old times, like before the war. Kiyomi held his hand when he was done and both walked to the mainroom. Everyone was there already and look up when they came in. His eyes narrowed faintly, did everyone have to stare so much? Hijikata gave Saito a fatherly smile, saying it was alright. Kiyomi look at Saito before she peck his cheek and release his hand and walk to Shinpachi.

She kneeled down and hugged him. ' ' Thank you, uncle Shinpachi.'

"Huh?" Shinpachi looked confused.

' ' You and Hajime saved me... I thank you for that.' ' she said as she rest her head on his shoulder.

"I should have gotten out a little sooner though... then it would have saved you."

' ' Hajime... said the same. But what counts for me is that you and him were for me. It's the though that counts. The love you have for me as niece and the love that Hajime has for me as his lover... I felt it. And Hajime is taking care of me. I am a blessed woman.' ' she said softly.

"It won't happen again though... that we can promise." Shinpachi said, clenching a fist, almost covering the bandages around his wrists.

Kiyomi smiled and stood up. ' ' Thank you.' ' she said and walked to her place next to Saito and kissed his cheek.

Isamu was eating his mother and made a face when she wanted to give him a pickle. Saito was for the most part silent. Kiyomi didn't touched much food. just rice and fish.

' ' Haji-Nii... tell Kiyomi-neechan she need to eat more.' ' said Mamoru. Hh didn't know what to say to his sister.

"Ah... it would be best if you ate a bit more..." Kiyomi look at Saito as she also took some vegetables. "Are you fine?"

Chizuru stood up and hugged them. '' I love you two.'' she said. '' It makes me happy to see you two.'' Saito was in a state of shock, he hadn't really expected such a thing. That he had some strange form of a family... was beyond luck for someone like him. '' Don't look like that. Toshizo and I love you just much as we love Mamoru and Kiyomi. After all, you are our son-in-law. So if you need help with anything... Toshi and I are here for you.'' said Chizuru to Saito.

"Yes. I know it well."

Sanosuke stood up and went to Kiyomi's place and picked up her bowl of half ate rice and placed the rest of her fish on it and gave her the bowl with her sticks.

'' Kiyomi, eat...'' he said softly.

He recalled silently his life with his own family... they had never once displayed a warm moment to him. Not even his mother, so it felt very strange to have the warmth he had here. Kiyomi took her bowl and Sanosuke placed his hand on her head and smiled faintly as he stood up again and went to his own place.

Chizuru placed a kiss on Saito's hair and stood up as well. '' I will get a dessert.'' she said.

'' I am with ya.'' said Osen and followed her sister.

Saito glanced at her and shifted out of his always oh so formal stance and settled for a more informal one, putting one leg out to the side and patting the spot in front of him... since she didn't feel comfortable... maybe if he let her sit against him she would feel better. Kiyomi took his invite and sat against his chest and snuggled against him before she was eating further.

Souji looked completely startled by that, that Saito would sit out of siza for her. Kosuzu look at Souji and giggled silently. Those were rare moments that her husband looked like that. Even Shinpachi wasn't sure what to think, in complete surprise.

'' Aniki, getting comfortable?'' asked Mamoru to Saito, using the older brother term since he had accepted him as well.

Chizuru and Osen came back. '' Isamu, come, just 2 spoons of rice and you are done.'' said Kosuzu.

This was a time Souji wished he could capture the moment forever. Chizuru and Osen gave everyone their dessert, water melon. Isamu took a bite of his own, his face full of the black seeds right away.

Saito didn't eat further, he had had what he needed. At least here there was enough food, on the mainlands the people were starving under the New Governments rule.

'' Daddy!'' called Isamu and hugged his father. Yep, he was a daddy's



boy.

"Ahh, there's my little guy. You're going to be a troublemaker when you get older aren't you?" Though anyone else would cringe, Souji seemed proud if he got a troublemaker.

' ' Yes!' ' he said happy. Kosuzu smiled.

' ' Soon, Isamu will have a playmate.' ' said Osen.

"Hmmm?" Souji raised a brow.

' ' It was not really planned but... it seems...' ' smiled Osen softly.

Shinpachi set a hand on his chin. "We had better keep all the children very safe... with this person... what if he wants Osen's children as well?"

Osen became a bit pale and touched her stomach. ' ' Well, Kenichi is at the family of Kazama so we don't need to worry about that. And if Osen gives birth to a boy... it shouldn't give trouble.' ' said Chizuru.

"Yes. That's true." Shinpachi nodded, but if it were a girl...

"No." Saito cut in. "They only want... because of Hijikata's blood."

' ' My... blood?' ' asked Hijikata

"Because you somehow become an oni what he was striving to create."

' ' I see.' ' said Hijikata. Chizuru said nothing, she had a vague idea of it...

"Now he thinks... he can use her."

' ' Mamoru and Isamu are also pure bloods... They are very strong... but indeed, Hijikata became an oni after he was a half.' ' said Kosuzu.

"And that is what he wants for his army." Shinpachi sighed. "Damn bastard... his own granddaughter."

' ' We will do everything to get them. Chikage...Wait a minute? Does Chikage know this?' ' asked Hijikata and Osen nodded no.

' ' I just discovered it today.' ' she said. Made sense since Kazama didn't visit Osen.

"He left pretty quick..." Shinpachi mused.

' ' He want to catch them and punish them. He was outraged as well when he heard about Kiyomi.' '

Shinpachi stood. "Well... we need to be out there to kill them first!"

' ' Chikage will look for their hide-out and then we can make plans...' said Hijikata. ' ' Everyone wants their revenge.'

"I want to get out looking too." Shinpachi said.

' ' No.' ' said Chizuru and every look at her. ' ' That is what he wants, Kodo. He is waiting until we are alone so he can attacks you.'

"Well that guy is already out there alone!"

' ' Chikage has two people near him, always.' ' said Osen.

Shinpachi let out a loud, irritated huff.

' ' No one goes alone outside.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' No one. If you want to take a drink or need to get something, take someone with you.'

Saito had no complaint, he wouldn't leave Kiyomi alone, not even for a second. He would stay near her at all times until that person was caught.

Isamu put his little finger on his lips. ' ' Sshhh.' ' to his father.

"Hmmm?" Souji looked confused.

Isamu point to Kiyomi, who was sleeping against Saito's chest.

' ' She must be tired...' ' said Chizuru and stood up and put a blanket on her. ' ' Do you need a pillow for your back so you can lean against the wall, Hajime?' ' asked Chizuru.

"No."

Kiyomi sighs deep. Chizuru went back to her place. Heisuke came back with sake and tea. He gave everyone a bottle except Osen, he gave her tea. He knew it wasn't proper to display affection in front of others, so he decided he would take her back to their room where she could rest comfortably.

' ' Hhmmmm...' ' mumbled Kiyomi in her sleep as Saito tried to move. He picked her up carefully, doing his best to not wake her. Osen was still happy. She wished she could tell him very soon.

' ' How did that happen?' ' asked Chizuru.

' ' Well, I forgot the morning tea...' ' said Osen.

' ' Okay...Osen is pregnant... Maybe time for Chizuru and Kosuzu as well?' ' snickered Heisuke.

"Hmm, another one eh? I don't mind. When do we start?" Souji asked.

Kosuzu giggled. ' ' Whenever you want.'

Chizuru said nothing.

' ' Aah Mom, please?' ' said Mamoru. Some boys were laughing softly. ' ' Come on mom, why can't Kiyomi and I have another sibling?' ' asked Mamoru.

"You see Mamoru... when a guy gets too old..." Souji began teasingly.

' ' I am not old! And... He works fine too!' ' said Hijikata embarrassed and Mamoru laughed.

' ' Well... I don't mind it but... Osen is already pregnant and with Kodo and the other guy...' ' said Chizuru, thinking.

"Ah..." Souji realized it probably was a difficult choice, if it were a girl...

' ' Having pregnant women... And... well if it is a girl.' ' said Chizuru. ' ' It will be dangerous.' '

"It's understandable." Shinpachi sighed. Though it shouldn't have to be this way.

' ' Just let's hope we will get them quick.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' And then we always can think about... a baby.' ' he said and Chizuru look at Hijikata.

"I suppose it's too dangerous for that right now." Souji admitted, rethinking his plans.

' ' Yea. We should keep an eye also on Osen then.. until Kazama returns.' ' said Kosuzu.

"I agree." Shinpachi said.

Hijikata nodded. ' ' Yes.' '

Kiyomi was sleeping but frowned her face. Saito glanced at her, setting his pen aside and finishing up on the small amount of paperwork that he had. She shift a bit in her sleep and sighs. He watched her in silence for a few moments, contemplating all the situations that had been going on. Setting all his work aside to clear up some space on the desk he moved back to her side.

She frowned again. ' ' ...' ' He set a hand on her cheek lightly, brushing her hair back. ' ' Don't... hurt...him...' ' she mumbled.

"You're fine..." He assured, lightly stroking his fingers through her hair in a soothing manner. She woke up with her eyes wide and inhaled deep. "It's fine."

She look at him and relaxed. ' ' Hajime... ' ' she said softly.

He more or less preferred to silently assure her it was fine, still lightly trailing through her hair. She inhaled deep and focused on his touch.

"You're at home."

' ' I know...' ' she said softly. ' ' Did I fell...asleep at

dinner?''

"You did."

She sighs. '' I was so tired...''

"That's quite alright."

'' Did I missed something?''

"No." He shook his head slowly.

'' I see.'' she said softly. '' Mother was sweet.''

"Hmmm. Did you have enough to eat?"

'' I am a bit hungry now. I just didn't felt like eating..since I was tired.''

"I can go get you something."

'' I know there are leftovers of some dango...'' He nodded and slowly got up. '' Come back...quick.'' she said softly.

"I will." He left the room quietly, if anyone was asleep it wouldn't do to disturb them. Slowly he headed to the kitchen and pushed the door open. Saito suddenly ducked behind the wall and he noticed Shinpachi walk by with a cup of sake. He had no interest in conversation, so he avoided at all costs.

Chizuru was walking around, her rounds as doctor and wife of the commander. If anyone needs something, she would help. Chizuru checked Kiyomi and found her. She look up and saw her mother.

'' Hey... feeling better?'' she asked and Kiyomi nodded. '' Do you want to eat now?''

'' Hajime is getting me food.'' said Kiyomi

Shinpachi made his way back to his room slowly, sighing, still upset over the events and Saito waited another moment before stepping into the kitchen and gathering things in a small bag to take back to the room.

Chizuru was checking her pulse and if she had a fever. Saito opened the door to them room and paused, seeing the both of them there, he hoped everything was alright. Had he left her too soon?

Chizuru saw his face and smiled faintly. '' It's alright, just checking. I am a mother after all.''

"There's nothing wrong?"

'' No... She is just tired... All the tension is coming out...''

"I see..." He was immediately relieved.

'' A good sleep and cuddles she will get better.'' smiled Chizuru. Kiyomi smiled faintly. '' Mamoru also asked again about you. I told him to let you rest.''

He glanced at her for a long moment before stepping into the room. Kiyomi sat up and saw he had indeed dango. Chizuru smiled.

' ' There was a time, I was addicted to it. ' '

He held out the bag for her and looked faintly worried then... a time...? Hopefully... it wasn't a cravings type thing... it didn't happen that fast right?

' ' When I was at the end of my pregnancy... I ate it every week on a day. Even I wanted it everyday, I was careful so I took fruit instead, healthy things. And at the end, I had you and Mamoru. ' ' said Chizuru.

>Kiyomi smiled. ' ' Mother, no need to worry, I had the education. ' ' <p>

' ' I... Souji told... about your fear... ' ' said Chizuru to Saito. ' ' I can completely understand you. But you shouldn't be afraid. I give birth to two children and I am a doctor. I can guide Kiyomi and you when the time is right. ' ' said Chizuru and ruffled softly through Saito's hair. ' ' But I do understand your fear. ' '

"I..." Souji... that bastard... he needed to kill him.

' ' You should talk with Toshizo... how he handled it. He was scared too since I am small and was carry a twin. ' '

"My blood isn't like his."

' ' I... have a vague idea why Toshizo became one... ' '

"If you know that, then no matter the costs it has to be kept from the knowledge of that person."

' ' I know. I will only say, it is for you possible as well. ' ' said Chizuru.

He nodded, but it was better that knowledge wasn't within his own personal knowledge, so that if that person did capture him, there was no way he could tell it.

' ' I will tell you when everything is save. ' ' said Chizuru with a smile. ' ' Eat Kiyomi. ' ' she said and kissed her daughter and then she hugged Hajime. ' ' Thank you. ' ' said Chizuru

Saito nodded, it was best that way. Chizuru left the room and Kiyoi took some dango and saw the papers on the desk.

' ' Were you working? ' '

"Just the usual reports on my patrols and to Aizu... however I... left out... that incident." He doubted she wanted anyone knowing.

She nodded. ' ' Thank you... ' ' she said. ' ' Something... is off and I don't know what but the guy that touched me... it seems... I know his face from something. ' '

Saito frowned deeply. "Hmm."

' Like I met him before but that is not possible, I saw him for the first time.' she said. A sigh left him, he wanted her to forget the terrible incident. She finished the first stick and took the second.

"I had hoped it would comfort you."

' ' Yes, it did. I even fell asleep.' ' she smiled faintly.

"I'm glad."

She finished the last stick and lay down on her side. He leaned his chin on his hand and watched her in silence, he intended to keep an eye on her. She didn't went to sleep, instead she was staring calmly in the room. The room was... lively now since Saito had returned. There wasn't really time for him to sleep, since he needed to watch over her. Not to mention his own personal nightmares. Speaking of which... he hadn't slept for almost 48 hours... a little rest that one night yes, but most of it had only been resting his eyes.

' Hajime... will you hold me so I can sleep? '

"Of course."

She smiled faintly. ' ' thank you.' ' He laid near her and held her, but he struggled with not falling asleep since he had to lie still. She look at him. ' ' You can sleep, itoshiii. I know I am save in your arms.' '

"No. You just rest... I'll stay awake and watch."

' ' Nothing will happen. You need to sleep as well..'

"What if you have another nightmare? I should be there to wake you."

' You will hear me then for sure...like I woke up when you had one.'

"That was a bit different... I almost..."

' Please... you need to rest. I want you to protect me but you need to rest for it.' He sighed deeply and nodded. ' I love you.' she said and kissed lightly his lips.

He so badly desired to keep her safe this time, he had failed once already, he just didn't want it to happen again. She snuggled against him and pulled up the blanket around them. At least he was at ease knowing there was a 24 hour guard that nobody should be able to pass through. Feeling save and warm in his arms, Kiyomi found her sleep very soon and was breathing slowly He would have stayed awake longer, truly he would have, but the position, no rest and the hours spent clearing the toxic silver from his system wore him down.

It was then late in the morning when Kiyomi woke up and saw above her head the small cup of cold tea but she knew what it was and took it.

>Then she snuggled against Hajime, thay had missed breakfast already  
so she would relax. He didn't even stir the faintest bit. Kiyomi

placed her ear against his chest, hearing his heartbeat. She always became calm, hearing it. Since he had gone so long without sleep, even a cannon blasting through the wall probably couldn't wake him.<p>

Chizuru and Kosuzu were hanging the sheets outside on the line while Osen was watching them. '' So warm... '' panted Kosuzu.

He was even so tired his mind hadn't produced any dreams at all.

'' When will daddy come?'' asked Isamu who sat next to Osen. '' Very soon and then you can take a bath with him.'' said Kosuzu.

Shinpachi stepped outside, he had stayed awake all night, personally passing back and forth outside their room, just to make sure everything was safe.

'' Are they still sleeping?'' asked Chizuru. She was the one who had given her tea.

"Yea..." Shinpach sat down and yawned. Isamu climbed on the lap of Shinpachi and leans against his chest.

'' Well, let them sleep... they need it.'' said Kosuzu.

Osen touched her stomach. '' Still it is weird that father never told us about our brother.'' said Osen.

"A dirty piece of-ahh." Shinpachu cut himself off, not wanting to curse in front of Isamu.

'' A dirty fish? Where?'' asked Isamu innocent. Osen laughed. '' You are such a cute boy.''

"Uhhh... yes. That was what I meant." Shinpachi covered up.

'' You should write Kenichi a letter he will become a big brother, then he will have a reason to visit us.'' said Chizuru.

"Pft, that kid is just like his father."

'' Yes, he wants to know everything about the Kazama history. I can understand that but I do miss him.'' said Osen and look at her flat stomach. '' So I hope this one... will be more like me.''

Souji showed up just around that time. "Ahhh... talking about the poodle again are we?"

'' Daddy!'' called Isamu.

'' Yes..'' said Kosuzu. '' I wonder how he will react on the news.''

Souji set a hand on his chin, trying to think up what Kazama's reaction would be, meanwhile Saito had stirred a bit.

Kiyomi put her nose on his and put her arm around him. He winced faintly when he was mostly awake, not from any wounds, it seemed those were mostly healed with his rest, but more or less those morning manly issues. She stroke her thumb over his cheek and gave

him a morning kiss.

She smiled faintly and snuggled closer against him. '' I slept very well. ''

"I'm glad..."

'' What about you? ''

"I... I don't remember falling asleep actually."

'' then you slept very well also. '' she said and moved her leg over his.

'' Let me hold yo very close. ''

"Mm..."

'' We missed breakfast anyway... even mother brought the tea. But that means we can be lazy until lunch. ''

"It's that late?"

'' Yes... '' she smiled. She moved herself closer again and moved her waist against his and then she felt it. Her cheeks were coloring. '' oh... '' she said shy.

"I was trying to avoid making things awkward for you."

'' How can that be? It is just... it's probably you dreamed about me somewhere... ''

"No... it's just something that happens in the morning..."

She giggled softly. '' I just teased you a bit.. ''

"Hm?"

'' I know it can happen, don't worry. ''

"If it's fine..." He moved back closer to her.

'' Yes... I don't mind it. '' she whispers.

"You're sure it doesn't bother you?"

'' No... I mean, you sleep with my chest as well. '' she joked softly.  
'' I didn't hear you complain about them. ''

She smiled and placed her nose on his. He closed his eyes and rested them a bit further, he was glad it hadn't made her uncomfortable, especially after what had happened.

'' I feel much better now after my rest... ''

"I am glad."

She pulled him closer to her and inhaled his scent. '' I want to stay like this. ''



"So do I."

Her nose was tracing his skin of his neck and scrape a bit his skin and taste a drop of blood. She didn't taste any silver in his blood so she carefully bit him. When she was drinking his blood, she became very calm. He didn't mind it so much and left her to do as she pleased, so long as it couldn't harm her. His blood warmed her up from inside. She moved her leg between his and held him by his waist so he couldn't get away from her. He gave a startled look, becoming a bit shifty again, but for different reasons. She inhaled a bit deep when she felt him shift but she didn't let him go. It felt too comfortable.

"Such a dangerous woman..." He muttered.

She smiled while she kept drinking and buried her other hand in his hair. There was the temptation to take over her, but he didn't, he remained patient with her. She licked softly over the spot, taking slowly by each lick some blood, resting her other hand on his side. For some time he was for the most part silent, picking up the sound of someone passing by the door. Probably an extra guard around this wing for her protection. She was done and bruised softly her lips over his, enjoying the silence and that Saito was with her.

"Do you feel better?"

' ' Yes... I... needed to taste you.' ' she confessed softly.

"That's fine." She pulled him closer and rest her head on his. "It's always fine." He felt like letting her know that. It was never a bother to him. Nothing she did ever was.

' ' Hajime... I am so blessed with you.' ' she said softly and touched his cheek.

"More like... it's the other way around."

She laughed quietly and kissed his cheek. How much she loves him. Another pair of footsteps headed by and this time, he was sure they set up a heavy guard to keep her safe. He was relieved though.

' ' Hold me tight...and love me, Hajime. Always...' ' she said softly.

"You needn't even ask." He already would without the request. The answer that he gave her, in such tone... She kissed him deep but gentle. This man...her Hajime... deserved such kisses. "It's the easiest thing I've ever had to do."

She giggled softly. ' ' It feels so nice to be loved.' '

"Yes it does."

' ' Are you happy... you've got parents again? And even a brother too?' '

"Again...? I... never truly had them to begin with."

' ' Hajime...' ' she said softly. He furrowed his brow faintly in response to the tone. ' ' I am sorry you were alone for a long time.

But you have me now...and my family.'

"There's no reason to be sorry for me."

She placed her hand on his cheek and kissed his neck. ' I love you...I love you so much...' she said between the kisses.

"I'm happy... that this time I can stay with you for the winter..."

' Yes, me too. No cold winters anymore.'

Briefly he glanced toward the wall, for safety measures he wondered how thick these walls really were, he wondered if guards were on the window as well. She was looking at him, she had a vague idea what he was thinking. At least he could be confident that this room was the safest one to be in. She touched his cheek and place a kiss on it. That made him completely lose his train of thought.

' What is it?'

"What is what?"

' You are thinking very hard...that much you are lost in though...' she smiled.

"I'm just considering tactics."

' Tactics?'

"Yes... guarding."

She smiled. ' I heard footsteps. I think my father gave the command to set up a guard.'

"Yes, I had assumed so. Until we catch that person... it's best not to go out anywhere at all..." He wanted to say probably not even out of this room, but then he didn't want her feeling tied down.

' Then how I am going to bath if I am here in my room?' she giggled softly.

"Hmmm... I'll have to be there to guard you then."

' I think... you din't mind that.' she smiled.

"... We-well..."

' Well..what' she said softly.

"Th-that-that... I..." He became nervous, still there was times, the thought of seeing her like that made him nervous.

She laughed quietly with flushed cheeks and snuggled against him. ' It makes your heart skipping some beats...isn't it? I never forget when I saw your butt for the first time.'

He thought for a moment before recalling the incident. She smiled and closed her eyes.

' ' I don't want to get up.' ' she said. ' ' Hajime...' ' she whispers his name softly in a singing manner.

"Hm?" He supposed it was probably a disgrace on himself as samurai for being able to become so embarrassed so easily when it came to women, but what else could he do?

She rolled him on his back and she climbed on him and out her hands on his chest and then she rest her chin on her hands and kept staring at him with a soft look.

He swallowed with difficulty, eyes shifty and not quite looking directly at her. God forbid he did he was in for it.

She start to giggle softly in a shy way. ' ' Do you love me that much?'

"Do I need to show it more that it isn't obvious?"

' ' Well you do already...' ' she said, being content how she lay on him, relaxed. She lay her head on his chest.

Meanwhile, Osen was sewing the clothing of Kazama since Chizuru had forbid her to do heavy household stuff. Kazama on the other hand planned to search relentlessly until he found something.

' ' And, do you though of a name already?' ' asked Kosuzu and Osen look at her.

' ' Well, I do have have one for a boy and one for a girl, starting both with a K.'

Shinpachi himself had assigned himself to also keeping extra guard, he took a short rest, but decided to get right back on guarding.

' ' Shinpachi, how are your wrists?'asked Chizuru.

"Huh?" Shinpachi looked down at them and flexed his fingers a bit. Still hurt like hell, but... "They're healing..."

' ' I will take a look.' ' said Chizuru and put gentle his hard formed hand in her soft delicate hands and checked his wrists.

"Actually, tearing them up helped, since the blood slicked up the ropes and let me slip out of them."

She smiled. ' ' I know. But you are a samurai and your hands are important. And Toshizo doesn't want to see anyone hurt.' ' she said and took out her sleeve a small box and open it. There was a gel in it and she put it on his wrists.

"It will heal, no worse than that time I almost got my thumb cut off."

' ' I know.' ' said Chizuru with a smile. ' ' You are a strong man.'

"Well, I would worry more about Saito, since apparently that stuff they shot him up with causes some kind of allergic reaction." Shinpachi pondered their situations and accidentally mused out loud.

"Though... even if he's older it seems like around her they act the same sage..."

'' They love each other dearly... and I gave him a cleaning potion and... what he needs to do know, is drinking from Kiyomi. Her blood will help to clean his veins as well. ''

"That's good. I guess in some weird way, him never being able to be a kid and having to go up with a tough dad, gave him the ability to be one now. So it kind of worked out for them. Maybe fate?"

'' I believe so. When I gave birth to both of them, all of you were watching them growing up. I did notice at the age of 14 that Kiyomi was watching Hajime. I thought it was normal since Mamoru was always hanging around Souji. When I discovered... they had feelings for each other, I needed to swallow but if I see them now... I can only smile and be proud. ''

"Really? Back then... I suppose it's normal, but still I think it has to be fate, since it could have been anyone that she took a liking to."

'' Yea. '' said Chizuru. '' If I see them, it reminds me of myself and Toshi. ''

"It does? Well, how did you notice she liked him for sure?" Shinpachi actually found it a curious situation, that out of all the guys around she picked Saito, but regardless he was glad because by now if not Saito probably would have been less careful and gotten himself killed without someone watching over him.

Chizuru chuckled. '' He was training outside in the garden. I was writing in my book about some potions when I noticed her, from a distance. And she kept looking at him. Until... I saw her... face changing...and she sighs deep and looked down. Then I knew, from her point, it was one-sided love... ''

"Ah, well it didn't quite turn out that way."

'' No... If I look back at the quiet girl...and now... she turned in a wonderful woman. ''

"Having all the women here is great, it makes it feel like a real home. I guess I haven't mentioned as often as I should how grateful I am for the home cooked meals."

Chizuru look at Shinpachi and smiled and pulled him in a hug. '' Thank you. And with all the children here... We became a close family. '' she said.

"With more family on the way." He added.

'' Yes. Osen is pregnant now... and Souji and Kosuzu want another one. I don't know about Hajime and Kiyomi yet but it will happen. '' she smiled.

"Heh, well... if things go alright with me and my dango shop babe I'd expect another too. I'm going to bring her here to live with us. Hopefully she'll accept my proposal. Geez... can't believe Saito proposed to someone before I did though."

' ' Yea... who had thought the one who is clumsy with woman ... would be now blessed with a lovely girl.' ' smiled Chizuru.

"I'm surprised he managed to get it out... probably had difficulty."

Chizuru giggled. ' ' I will warn Toshizo that he need to build some extra rooms.' '

"Kind of figured we would have to do that already." Shinpachi replied.

' ' Ooh look who we have there.' ' smiled Chizuru. It was Kiyomi and behind her Saito, both still wearing the sleeping clothes.

' ' Hello mother, uncle Shinpachi.' ' she said softly.

' ' Hello Kiyomi...Hajime.' ' said Chizuru with a smile.

"Finally awake?" Shinpachi asked.

' ' Yes. We were very tired.' ' said Kiyomi softly. Chizuru checked her daughter right away and then she look at Saito. Chizuru was checking his pulse, his eyes and his temperature.

' ' I do recommend to drink a bit from Kiyomi, her blood will clean your veins extra.' ' smiled Chizuru, like it was a normal thing to do.

"I understand."

' ' Mother, can I use the private bathroom? Saito want to keep an eye on me while I bath...' ' she said.

Saito tensed up. "N-no-not like that."

' ' I know.' ' smiled Chizuru. ' ' You want to make sure she is save. That's why I approve her to use the private bathroom of me and Toshizo.' '

Both were walking to the bathing place of Toshizo and Chizuru. Kiyomi opened the door to the bathing place. There was a small hot spring and bathing place were you could clean yourself before entering the hot spring. She went to the bathing place and put her kimono down. She was getting water from the souce and filled the sink and sat down. All in all he was doing his best to not look at her at all. She placed the water over her hair and picked up the soap and washed her hair,

' ' Hajime... I now you are guarding right now... but there are more guards around... why not taking a dip in the hot spring?'

"... I can't relax at a time like this... also... I would be invading the vice commander's personal space."

Kiyomi walked to him and placed a pile of foam on his head. ' ' He is your father now... I can understand with important people you will call him that... but with me... just call him different.' ' she smiled.

"I... didn't even realize. It's a habit."

She chuckled and went back to wash her self, leaving the foam on his head. She plashed the soap away from her hair and was washing her body.

He tried wiping it away, but it seemed the spot of hair was already soapy and sticky now. "Hmmm."

Kiyomi was humming softly and was washing her arm. She was happy if she could use this bathroom. He glanced at her briefly, but then seeing her like that, he averted his gaze just as quickly. She washed herself clean again from the soap and cleaned the place from the soap and went in the hot spring and relaxed. She filled her hand with a bit of warm water and stroke her neck with it...

He turned to face the door completely, difficult... very... difficult.

She went under water and came up, feeling the fresh air and stroke her hair backwards. '' You should wash yourself at least after the workout we had.'' she said.

"Mm..." He couldn't think a properly reply.

She sighs and just closed her eyes, relaxing. It felt great, the hot water. He settled for folding his hands behind his back, at least that was something to keep from fidgeting. She opened one eye and a smirk showed up. His eyes were closed and he was blushing, he was trying to keep himself decent in front of her... She splashed him wet and laughed quietly.

He jumped in surprise, though, a lesser man might have been angry, he just relaxed afterwards and glanced at her.

She kept laughing softly. '' You were asking for it...''

"Hmm?" He looked confused, but also somehow faintly amused.

'' Your cheeks were flushing..' ' she smiled...'' While you kept your eyes closed...''

"You noticed..."

'' I did...' ' she said and showed the smile that was only made for him.

So it seemed he wasn't so good at hiding things, not from her at least. It was impossible, but for some reason he didn't mind her being able to see through him. She placed her arms on the edge of the spring and placed her chin on it and she kept gazing at him, her black hair floating in the water. He tried not to look at her though, this really wasn't the time or place... right? He glanced out for just a moment, seemed safe still.

Hijikata had heard from Chizuru they were bathing and was close by with his swords, together with Mamoru. There were guards of course but Hijikata wanted to keep them safe. Mamoru yawned.

"Hm, I suppose you won't need my guard any longer... at least in here..." he mused.

Kiyomi smiled at him. '' So... what are you going to do now?''

"I... am not sure..."

'' Clean yourself up and take a dip with me. I doubt if you had any changes to use a hot spring on the mainland.''

"Mmm, with Hijikata that close..." it wasn't too comfortable a prospect.

'' Hajime, we are engaged and everyone knows about us...' said Kiyomi. '' Do you really think my father let me use the bathroom with you if he did not approve of us?'' she smiled.

"I know that, but still..."

She went out the spring and walked to him, her hair dripping and small strands sticking on her face. '' Hajime... you need to wash yourself... and I want to check...your wound as well...''

"Y...you..." He held his hands in front of himself this time, getting more and more nervous.

She blinked a few time before she get it. '' Are you?'' she asked and laughed softly. He merely made a sound of frustration and glanced away. '' You don't... need to be ashamed...' she said softly and touched his cheek. '' It's a normal reaction.''

"But to not be able to control myself... after always being able to with everything else..."

'' You can't always control your feelings. Even you were gone... I was longing...longing for your sweet smile. Your sweet words, your touch... for being with me... It felt like that time when I though it was one-sided and that I admired you from far away.''

"But I always have..."

'' Everybody loses control when it comes to the person you care about.' Well... he wasn't quite sure what to say, but he was increasingly uncomfortable and shifty. She stood on her toes and whisper in his ear. '' Do.. you want me... to touch you?''

His shoulders tensed up as he shivered faintly under the suggestion. "Bu-but the vi-Hijikata isn't that far..."

'' Then you need... to be quiet... we were before...' she whispers as her hand slide softly over his side. He glanced at the door, was that possible? '' Be quiet..' she said and her hand vanished between the hakama.

He brought his hand up and bit into it to remain silent, having not expected that so suddenly.

She pulled him against her and kept the pace she was using. '' If you want to drink... you can do so... need to clean your blood

system...' she whisper in a soft moan, feeling his reaction.

He offered up his hand to her, since he bit hard enough to draw blood, before turning her towards the wall and setting the other hand against it to keep balanced. She licked his hand clean and rest her hand on his waist while the other was still were it was. He had to look a way for a moment, gritting his teeth. She teased him a bit, licking very slow his finger and even put his finger in her mouth to make sure it became clean. He inhaled sharply and leaned further against the wall with his arm, fist slowly clenching up. That... that just really put him on edge... She held his hand and kept playing with it while her other hand sped up a bit the pace. It seemed she was really going to kill him doing that... he was slightly paranoid that they might even hear his loud breathing and know what was going on. but also perhaps it just sounded loud to him since he was worried.

She puffed warm air in his ear.. '' Tensing up...aren't you?''

He turned his attention to the place between her neck and shoulder, maybe he would just distract her. She inhaled when she felt the warm air on her skin. He lightly bit at her skin there, just drawing a faint bit of blood from a small scrape, nothing too major. A shiver went trough her body and she trembled a bit. Was it because they were outside in the fresh air that she was so sensitive, more then normal? He slowly lapped at the blood, he was in no hurry, only because doing it that way would take a long while before things ended. Her hands went through his hair, entangling the strands between her fingers. She changed her tactic below, wondering if he would like it that way too. He froze and winced, it was difficult to just hold still for her, but he was doing his best.

'' Want to move your hips..?'' she whispers.

"No." He wanted to, yet he didn't. More or less he just wanted to stay still and enjoy her touching him.

She kissed him gentle and smiled in their kiss. It was wonderful to see him like this. It was a side that she only knew... He set the other hand on the wall as well, trapping her between him and the wall. Since she had touched him, it would be lying if he said had hadn't had other thoughts. She smiled. He wouldn't admit it... That was so him and she kept caressing him. He was sure she'd think he was a pervert if he asked and he couldn't even ask if he wanted, so he didn't bother.

She closed her finger softly around his hand and guided him down and let him feel what he was doing to her. '' You have no idea how you can turn me on if you are like this... It excites me to see you reacting on me.''

"Then... I hope you're ready to be like that a lot... since just looking at you sometimes is enough."

'' Ooh Hajime...' she whispers... He glanced down for a moment then had to quickly look away... he hadn't thought that through... '' why looking away?''

"If I look I'm going to..."



She didn't say anything because she was trying to suppress it but...it didn't work... she was getting close. He sighed deeply, this was difficult. She was inhaling through her nose, being all quiet... but she couldn't stop her whimper when she lightly tighten. It was small but... still feeling nice. She exhaled a long breath.

'I just...' she breathed out and put a leg around his waist to pull him closer and kissed him deep.

She smiled and kissed his neck and went slowly down and kissed his chest and his abdomen and his waist while she kept doing what she was doing. She just wanted to shower him with kisses to show him that he was everything to her. Still in all respects he was surprised she was fine with touching him like that. He wasn't dense, he had heard women making comments about 'that' particular part being disturbing to them.

She kissed softly his waist. 'Most of the women would be depressed after such a situation but... I wanted to conquer my fear and face it on.' she said and stood up and stared at him. 'And How can I be scared of you, such a sweet man...'

"But I would wait... for as long as you needed me to."

'I know.' she said softly and knelt before him and kissed his lower abdomen. Her finger went over it, softly and very slow. She placed a kiss on his waist as her lips trailed slowly down, dangerous over his leg, near it. He quickly glanced away... this wasn't good... she was going to kill him. Would she dare it? She wondered... She moved her head to the side and touched it lightly with her nose.

He jumped slightly, startled. No... there was no way possible she would do that. His reaction... was cute. She only made small circles on it with her nose and touched it lightly with her lips, teasing him. He did his utmost to hold back, while she was that close it probably would be better to hold back...

She kept doing the same, feeling him struggle...sooner or later he needed to give in, right? She smiled a bit... and hugged him by pulling him closer against her. He had no idea how to put it nicely but...

"T-to-to...? Th-that's... you would really want to..."

She gave him one last kiss on his stomach before she went further and took it. Her arms closed gently around his waist. The reaction she felt was.. you couldn't describe it but a low soft groan escaped her mouth. By the sound he let out as she pushed him over the edge with that action... he had no doubt that everyone would know exactly what was going on.

Kiyomi was careful and gentle... she wanted to love him...showing him...and let him feel it. Kiyomi kept her pace was caressing his waist and butt. She wondered if she did right but hearing Hajime, it seems she was. Oh, he felt terrible for being so loud and at the same time he didn't care, this definitely felt too good to last much longer, probably only seconds away. She felt he was near and kept going...

Just as he was about to say something and give a fair warning it was

already too late. "S-sorry... I didn't... I'm sorry..." it probably wasn't pleasant for her

She wiped her mouth with her towel and look at him with a soft look. '' Don't apologize... it was a surprise... but it didn't felt wrong.'' she said. She made the towel wet and cleaned were the mess was. '' No, refresh yourself.. '' she said as she put her outfit on. '' I will wait.''

Although everyone knew he hurried up and cleaned himself, lingering any longer than needed wasn't too good. When he was done and all dressed, she opened the door and proceeded down the hall and saw her father, brother aunt and...her nephew.

'' Kenichi...'' she said softly. '' You have grown...''

"It seems the same can be said for you." Though he meant the situation with Saito more than anything else.

She look at Saito behind her and smiled then softly to Kenichi. '' I have...'' It was a smile that made her more beautiful then anything.

"Why choose a mutt?" Kenichi asked.

'' Human, halfbreed or pure blood... Whatever he is, I choose him. I love him and he is the man I choose as my partner.'' said Kiyomi.

"I only accept it because father does..."

'' Come on Ken-kun...'' said Mamoru.

"Tch, what is that look on your face?" Kenichi seemed unamused with Saito's look.

'' That is none of your concern, Ken-san. Come, Hajime.'' said Kiyomi and took Saito's hand in hers.

"Hmp." That, was an identical sound to Kazama's. He was a daddy's boy for sure.

\* \* \*

><p>Osen was in her bed and with the blanket over her. '' Kenichi... don't tell your father... I want to tell him...'' said Osen.<p>

"I will refrain from telling him." Kenichi stated.

Osen smiled softly as Chizuru came in with Kiyomi and Saito to visit the ill feeling Osen.

Chizuru sat next to Osen. '' How are you feeling?'' asked Chizuru. '' I feel sick but hungry at the same time.'' said Osen and Chizuru smiled and examine her.

'' A slight fever, that's normal. Your pulse is good and breathing as well. You don't show any other problems. I made some tea for the nausea.'' said Chizuru and gave the cup and Osen was drinking it.

Kiyomi look at Osen who was laying down again. '' Now rest until Chikage comes home so you can tell him.'' said Chizuru and Osen smiled faintly. Saito was still nervous about the whole situation.

Osen held the hand of Kenichi. '' I am happy your are here with me. I miss you.''

Hijikata place a hand on Hajime's shoulder and pulled him lightly against him, a fatherly gesture. The movement surprised him, but he didn't tense up or pull away. Hijikata wanted to assure him it was alright.

Chizuru look at Kenichi. '' You have grown in a nice young man.''

"I appreciate your comments aunt." Kenichi replied.

Chizuru giggled. '' So much like your father. So I think you heard you are going to be a big brother.''

"Yes. I have heard."

'' What do you think of it?''

"I am pleased the bloodline is becoming so strong."

They all made a sweatdropped face with a smile, really the son of Kazama this one.

Suddenly the door opened and Kazama stood there, frowning. "What are these mutts doing in my room?"

'' Uncle Kazama...'' said Kiyomi softly.

'' Osen is not feeling well, Chikage.'' said CHizuru.

"Not feeling well? What's happened?" He questioned.

'' I... I am pregnant...Chikage...'' said Osen softly.

There was a silence for a long moment. "Another heir for our great clan... excellent news..."

Chizuru stood up and lead Hijikata, Kiyomi and Saito out of the room. When Osen, Kenichi and Chikage were alone in the room, Osen touched her stomach. Kazama looked more than pleased to hear of this, he had a prince, a princess would add just enough to his ideal family.

'' I really wanted to tell you...'' said Osen softly and sat up. She look at him, longing for a hug. She hadn't see him for a long time.

Kenichi took a hint and left, to leave the two alone. Kazama raised a brow at the boy, well it seemed he was able to understand quite easily.

Osen smiled faintly. '' He turned out a strong oni, Kuma-chan.'' Kazama sat near her, silently starting at a wall before he dropped an arm over her shoulders and pulled her into his side into a hug.

' ' Thank you for giving us another beautiful child.' ' said Osen. ' ' I...I have a name... if it becomes a girl...' '

' ' Yes... I was thinking of Katsumi, meaning Harmonious beauty...' ' said Osen.

"It sounds beautiful." Kazama replied.

"Is that so? It would be the beginning of an excellent line." Kazama mused.

Kiyomi and Mamoru were sparring together in the garden, while Hijikata and Saito were watching. ' ' How is she doing?' ' asked Hijikata to Saito.

Saito watched carefully, analyzing each movement. "It seems she is doing well."

' ' Kenichi...want to join me and Kiyomi?'asked Mamoru when he saw his nephew.

Kenichi mumbled something under his breath, glancing at the soldier that walked by with a tray of sake towards Saito and Hijikata.

"Vice Commander, Captain, it seems you could use a drink."

' ' Ken-kun, are we not elite enough for you?' ' laughed Mamoru.

' ' Sake? in the middle of the day?' ' raised Hijikata an eyebrow.

"There is tea as well." The soldier answered and Saito wasn't the type to turn down a drink and took a cup of sake, middle of the day or not, he had no duties.

Hijikata took a cup as well. ' ' One won't hurt.' ' said Hijikata.

The soldier bowed and headed off.

' ' Hey, I wanted too.' ' said Mamoru.

' ' Monkey, the only thing what you want is dodge my fist.' ' said Kiyomi. ' ' Ken-kun... come on.' '

"I doubt either of you could match my skills." Kenichi replied, arms crossed.

Saito sighed, that guy was like Kazama really. He took a drink and winced. "Strange."

Hijikata look at his cup. ' ' Weird tasting...isn't?' '

"It is..."

On the other side of the base the man tossed off his cloak as he mounted a horse, stuffing a vile of powdered silver into his jacket and riding off in a hurry.

Hijikata's cup was empty and suddenly he hold his stomach.

Saito hadn't had as much, but he also felt the affects and reached for his sword. "That... person..."

' ' Dad!' ' - ' ' Father! Hajime!' ' called Mamoru and Kiyomi and run to them.

"No... that person... don't let them escape... to inform their master!" Saito set a hand against the wall to support himself, knowing this was bad without them there as protection...

Mamoru nodded and whistle on his finger, calling for the troops and was running off.

' ' Father... Hajime. let's go to your room, father so mother can threat you two.' ' said Kiyomi.

Saito didn't move, this time... he didn't think he was going to make it.

' ' Chikage!' ' called Hijikata.

Saito's last thought before he collapsed, was that he hoped Mamoru would catch the assassin before he informed his master... or else it would be all out war within this base.

\* \* \*

><p>The battle continues next chapter!<p>

## 10. The Grand Final

Disclaimer: We do not own Hakuoki.

Title: Sweet and Bitter

>Category: AnimeManga Â» Hakuoki

>Authors: Mrs. Hijikata and Yu<br>Language: English

>Rating: Rated: M<br>Genre: Hurt/Comfort/Romance

>Published: 225/15

Author's notes: Dear Readers, please remember that this story is fiction and we do not adhere to historical facts. Clearly, as the Shinsengumi did not survive the war, nor did Hijikata have a surviving daughter, nor did they win their own slice of heaven on the island of Hokkaido. As with the anime/manga/game and most movies and books the history and facts are changed to make an interesting story. If you are pleased with the story, please, continue to enjoy our final chapter and we thank you for supporting us, if it is not pleasing to you, you may click the red X on your right, top hand corner. We hope to make many more adventures with you in the future. Thank you very much dear readers. ã^°3

\*\*\_Red Rose Inc. Presents...\_\*\*

\*\*\_Sweet and Bitter

><em>\*\*

\*\*\_Starring Mrs. Hijikata as Hijikata Toshizo\_\*\*

><strong><em>And<em>\*\*

><strong><em>Yu starring as Saito Hajime<em>\*\*

\*\*\_Additional characters also played by Mrs. Hijikata and Yu\_\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Kazama hurriedly stepped out, looking furious for being interrupted, but then seemed to put that aside when he saw the situation.<p>

Hijikata tried to keep standing but saw Saito passing out, Kiyomi trying to put her blood in his mouth, since she knew that pure blood would help healing. '' CHikage..me and...Hajime... we are...poisoned. We need...Chizuru my room..' ' he groaned. '' Mamoru...is after...Assassin. ''

"Get them to their room and secure the surrounding area immediately!" Kazama demanded of some men, that were idly standing by in horror.

Two soldiers picked up Hijikata and Saito and brought them to Hijikata's room and CHizuru was there right away to threat them. Sanosuke was standing guard now at the gate and everyone needed to state what their purpose was.

Kiyomi sat on the ground...hiding her face behind her bangs while her wrist was red from her blood.

A couple men hurried Souji in as well, it seemed that the man had gotten to him as well and Kazama scowled.

"They are trying to take out the defenders that stand in their way. Bring me the other dogs as well. Set up a guard in this room. Nobody leaves it tonight." Kazama ordered.

Osen and Kosuzu were helping as well. Kiyomi had bandaged her wrsit and was helping as well.

Meanwhile Mamoru cut the throat of the assasin and sting his katana through his head and even cut his arms off. He was pissed and he didn't care what would happen witht he assasin.

When he was done he looked in the bags of the pants and jacket and found the silver powder.

He jumped on his horse and sped so fast as possible back, reaching the town. '' MAKE WAY!'' he shouted so that people would jump away.

He was racing, his father and brother-in-law... the face of his sister...

>He arrived at the gates and Sanosuke let him in.<p>

Isamu sat next to his father and lay his tiny head on his shoulder. '' ' Daddy...' ' he said softly.

"The pathetic creature offered me the drink as well..." Kazama stated, but he had chosen to stay with Osen rather than go drinking.

Chizuru gave Souji and Hajime the cleaning potions first, a bit stronger one than normal. Kosuzu wiped the forehead of Souji and Kiyomi the head of Hajime. Osen was preparing Hijikata for the potion as Hijikata turned on his side and shouted it out of the pain and throw up.

' ' Father...' ' called Kiyomi and the tears fell down... her family... was in such pain.

' ' Mom!' ' panted Mamoru, totally covered in blood. ' ' It...it was silver powder!' ' he said and showed the jar. Chizuru stood up and took it. ' ' I am going to analyze this. Mamoru, give your father the potion.' '

"Make sure a guard is with you." Kazama added in, none of them could be alone right now.

' ' I stay here.' ' said Chizuru and shove away the screen, this room being connected with her work room. She walked to her desk and started to work. Mamoru gave his father the potion.

' ' Mamo...did you...?' ' panted Hijikata.

' ' I cut him in thousand pieces... I was so pissed.' ' said Mamoru, having tears in the corner of his eyes.

Kazama glanced at him, brow raised. "Then you've sent a message of your own, just not the one Kodo hoped for."

' ' I will destroy him as well.' ' said Mamoru. Osen checked Souji and Saito, their breathing stable, just having a bit of a high pulse and a fever. Kiyomi buried her face in the shoulder of Kazama. She couldn't see this... Her father, her fiancée, her uncle...

This time Kazama refrained from his usual comments about the group of mutts.

' ' Uncle Kazama... it's so unfair...' '

"This is how war is. We are at war with Kodo."

' ' Because...of me... He wants me...' ' sniffed Kiyomi. ' ' He hurt the ones I love...' ' - ' ' Osen, take a rest.' ' said Chizuru and Osen nodded. Isamu touched his father his cheek. ' ' daddy...' '

"Do not feel guilty for it. It is a honor for such mutts to protect pureblood."

' ' Stop calling them mutts!' ' shouted Kiyomi and she runs out the room, crying. ' ' Chikage, you went too far this time.' ' said Osen.

"I was trying to instill anger over despair."

Mamoru took Kiyomi back. ' ' You won't go anywhere... They are hunting on you.' ' he stated.

"In a survival situation, anger is better than despair." Kazama stated calmly, it was what he had learned in his training.

Kiyomi sat in between her father and Saito and bit on her lip.  
Chizuru came back with new medicine and gave it to Hijikata Saito and Souji. '' if I am right, they will wake up soon. ''

A sigh left Kazama, that person had to be dealt with soon... and... he had an idea how to do it.

Isamu climbed in his mother's lap and fell asleep.

Chizuru was looking at Kiyomi who seemed lost..'' Kiyomi... they will be fine...'

'' But... they...''

'' Oi sis, if Hajime wakes up, you better smile. If he sees you crying he feels sad as well. '' said Mamoru.

"That is true." Kazama stated, though for her sake and not Saito's.

Kiyomi dried her face and place a kiss on Saito's head. '' I love you. '' she whispers. Osen, Kosuzu and Isamu were already sleeping. Osen against Kazama. Mamoru put blankets on them.

'' Uncle Kazama, shall we two guard tonight?'' asked Mamoru. '' So mother can keep an eye on them?''

"Yes. We must watch carefully."

Not much later, Kiyomi fell asleep, laying near her father and Hajime.

>Chizuru put a blanket over her. '' Their pulse went to normal.. it's only the fever now. ''<p>

"They are lucky... even a full blooded demon would be in trouble." Kazama mused.

Hijikata frowned and came to finally. '' Toshi...'' said Chizuru softly and Mamoru sat by. '' Dad. '' he called.

'' I am thirsty. Is there any water?'' he asked and Mamoru filled a cup and gave it to him.

"I would suggest from now on not taking drinks from anyone other than close family."

'' Yea...'' said Hijikata and finished the cup and sat up.

'' Toshi, how you feeling?'' asked Chizuru.

'' Dizzy... and warm. ''

'' You still have a fever, dad. '' said Mamoru.

Hijikata held his head. Chizuru turned around and showed her shoulder.

>'' Drink, You need fresh blood. '' she said. Hijikata did was as told and bit just hard enough to draw blood.<p>

'' Uncle Kazama, why is silver so... painful for us?'' asked



mamoru.

"Silver reflects light, light destroys dark, Oni are made of dark... hence an Oni could be destroyed by silver."

' ' I see... ' '

' ' How...are the others? ' ' asked Hijikata.

' ' They didn't wake up yet. ' ' said CHizuru.

Kazama pulled a paper and scrubbed something down on said paper, handing it to his son. "Give this to Kiyomi when she wakes... it may stall Kodo."

' 'Sis, wake up. ' ' said Mamoru and she open her eyes and sat up straight.

' ' Hajime.. is he awake? ' ' she asked.

' ' No... but you need to give him blood. ' ' said Mamoru. Kiyomi nodded and did the same as Kosuzu.

Kenichi stepped inside with the letter, but paused when he noticed them.

' ' what is it. ' ' asked Mamoru.

Kenichi glanced at the letter, it was an awkward letter to give, but Mamoru couldn't see it.

Kosuzu was done and went back to Isamu. It was only Kiyomi and Mamoru who were awake.

"I have... orders..."

' ' For who? ' ' asked Mamoru and Kiyomi looked up when she had given blood to Hajime. She gave him more then he would even took so she hoped it would heal his body.

"Kiyomi..."

Kiyomi stood up and walked to Kenichi and took the letter and opened it. In the letter, a shocking suggestion. Kazama proposed his idea, if Kiyomi were pregnant than there was nothing Kodo could do with her other than wait. It could quell the danger long enough for them to kill him.

' ' Mamoru... I will be right back, uncle Kazama needs me. ' ' she said and left the room and went to Kazama.

"Hmmm...?"

' ' I understand the idea.. but how I will be able to do that? Hajime is still sleeping. ' '

"I didn't mean right this instant... but it is important if you want to stall Kodo long enough, aside from that... I believe you've wanted to have one in the first place. Am I wrong?"

Kiyomi blushed softly. '' Yes, I really want a child with Hajime. ''

"Then the plan is the perfect time."

She nodded. '' Thank you. '' she said and went back.

Kazama wasn't all to excited about the idea, but she loved the mutt and it was better than her being force breed by Kodo or his little lacky.

Kiyomi came back and sat next to Hajime. Mamoru looked at her. '' What was he asking? ''

'' Nothing, Mamoru. ''

Souji seemed to come too a bit, though, not looking well at all. "Not again..." at first he thought perhaps is disease had come back.

Kosuzu woke up hearing him. '' Honey... How are you feeling? You were poisoned. ''

"Poisoned? What bastard dared to do it?"

'' An assassin. father and Hajime are poisoned as well. Father came by... Hajime not. '' said Mamoru. '' And I chopped the bastard in pieces. ''

"Good on you then, I only wish I could have joined you."

'' Better be with Isamu, he was with you all the time. '' said Mamoru.

'' He sleeping now... '' Kosuzu replied. Kiyomi bent over Hajime and kissed his cheek.

"Hajime-kun is down? When he was already still injured?" Souji tried to sit up, but unfortunately he failed.

'' Yes... '' said Mamoru and Kiyomi bit on her bottomlip, trying to hold her tears back.

"Those cowards... they can't even face us in fair combat?!" Souji was just getting more and more angry, but unfortunately he couldn't get up.

'' Sshhh... Hijikata and Chizuru are sleeping. '' said Kosuzu. '' Do you need blood? ''

"I need blood alright, squirting from that bastard's headless body."

'' Souji... '' said Kosuzu softly and kissed him gentle to shut him up. Well... for now, only for now that argument flew off somewhere else.

Kiyomi lay next to Saito and hugged him. She went to his ear and whispered, if he came out of this, she really want to have a child with him...

Kenichi decided to return to patrol with his father... this was a bit of an awkward time for him. Time went by and it was morning. Chizuru gave Hijikata and Souji breakfast, both were sitting already but Saito... he hadn't move at all.

' ' Isn't that bad?' ' whispers Kosuzu to Osen and Osen nodded. Chizuru gave Saito extra medicine. Kiyomi sat in the corner of the room, with her knees up, her arms around and her face hiding.

Souji, he wasn't going to believe anything other than that Saito was going to be fine, but for once, the first time he ever thought it... maybe he wasn't. Souji sighed and leaned over Saito, though he himself was still in pain, he held an egg under his nose.

"Smell it, Hajime-kun... tofu and an egg... don't you want it?"

Mamoru chuckled softly, uncle Souji was always like that. Hijikata smiled faintly as well. Kiyomi wanted to stand up but her mother stopped. ' ' You gave already too much blood.' ' she warned her daughter.

Kiyomi look at her mother. ' ' I just want to put his head on my lap...' ' she said softly.

Souji cringed in pain and started to cough from the pain in his stomach. He almost threw up just then. Kosuzu went quickly to him and helped him. Chizuru gave Souji some medicine to sooth the pain and to clean out his veins. She gave the same to Hijikata.

' ' What about... Hajime?' ' asked Kiyomi softly.

Souji winced, there was blood, but not from his lungs, more from his stomach. His insides really felt like they'd be turned inside out with that stuff.

Kosuzu looked very worried. ' ' Chizuru... they won't...die... will they?' ' she asked scared.

' ' I don't know... I do my best...' ' said Chizuru softly.

"Ugh... I... did not miss that taste at all."

' ' Drink from me, Souji.' ' said Kosuzu. Her blood was sweet to him and it would heal a bit too.

Hijikata held his stomach too, is was still hurting.

"Lucky him... Hajime-kun gets to sleep through it. He'll wake up completely alright." Souji scoffed.

' ' Want a sleeping potion then?' ' asked Chizuru.

Isamu went to his father. ' ' Daddy pain?' '

"Nonsense... this is nothing." Souji assured his son, no way he'd risk looking weak in front of his boy.

Isamu hugged his father. Kosuzu smiled softly. Hijikata lay down and

sigs deep and look at his daughter... who her face was tensed of worrying about Hajime.

Kiyomi touched his cheek. '' Please... wake up...please...'' she begged softly.

"Hajime-kun is just being lazy... no need to worry." Souji stated.

'' You gave him almost two buckets of your own blood.'' said Chizuru a bit angry. ''What were you thinking?!''

Souji made a face, that wasn't a good tone.

'' He can't die. He can't. He has already had so much struggles in his life. He can't just die when he found happiness with me... Those four years... when we were alone...'' said Kiyomi softly.

"Hajime-kun won't die so easily..." Souji tried to convince her.

Chizuru was reading through a book of Western medicine, trying to find more ideas for neutralising silver.

Kiyomi didn't care of her father and Souji was there ot the others. She bent down and kissed Hajime's lips lightly. '' Wake up...'' she whispers.

Saito's fingers twitched briefly.

She didn't saw it because she kept kissing him lightly, her thumbs stroking his cheeks. Kosuzu let Isamu look the other way.

Saito briefly grimiced from a stab of pain, but otherwise didn't move from the position.

'' Hajime...'' she whispers when she saw his face moved. '' My love...''

'' What the... Chizu, what is that smell?'' asked Hijikata.

'' I read in a Western medical book about neutralising silver... so I am putting the ingredients together...'' she said.

He barely peeked an eye open, but closed it again. Too sensitive to the light, but he was awake.

Kiyomi sniffed and some tears fell on his face. '' welcome back...'' she said softly with a tone she was smiling.

"Where did I go?" He questioned, not understanding the greeting.

She chuckled between her tears. '' You, father and uncle Souji have fought for your life... you three were poisoned. Mamoru caught the man and when he did he was... was filled with rage... he... cut the guy into small pieces.''

"Such a lowly tactic can't kill a warrior."

She kissed his cheek. '' She tried to drown you too... Chizuru said she almost gave you two buckets of blood.'' said Kosuzu to Saito.

"Why would you risk yourself? Try not to do such dangerous things."

'' I didn't want to lose you...'' she said softly.

Chizuru was done with the new medicine and gave it to Hijikata. '' ewl, it taste salty.'' he said and CHizuru nodded. '' That's right. Drink it up.''And Hijikata did as he was told.

Chizuru also made for Souji the same and for Hajime. Saito was insistant on not lying down so, despite the pain he forced himself up and glanced around for his weapon.

Kiyomi held him. '' What are you going to do?''

"I can't waste anymore time lying around."

She pushed him down and hang above him. '' No! I won't let you go! You almost died! I can't see you die! '' she said angry, yet the tears felt down. '' I won't let you go.'' she said and her arms trembled.

'' Hajime... you stay here.'' said Hijikata. '' Even a full demon like me, I am still in pain.. so no doubht you and Souji as well.''

"If you think I'm going to die so easily... have more faith in me."

'' Your pulse was very low...'' said Kosuzu. '' Hajime... drink your medicine.'' said Chizuru and gave him his cup.

He took the cup and downed it right away, before trying to get up again. Kiyomi sat on his lap and glared at him. '' You won't go anywhere...''

"I do. I need to get out there and find this person before it goes too far."

'' Mamoru killed him... And everyone is working on it already. Uncle kazama, kenichi, Uncle Sano, Uncle Shinpachi, Uncle Heisuke...everyone!''

"Then one more person will be much more-..." He winced.  
"helpful."

'' You are still in pain! I won't let you go! If a warrior falls onto his knees in a battlefield, it's over!'' shouted Kiyomi. '' You didn't came back to me to leave me alone again!'' she cried now.

"I'm not... leaving you alone."

'' Then... please stay in bed... '' she said before she fell forward, being dizzy. Being all worked up, giving blood and didn't sleep not too mention worry like crazy... made her exhausted. Saito looked

terribly concerned at that.

Chizuru helped Kiyomi up. ' ' I think it is time you will catch your sleep with Hajime.' ' she said as she lay Kiyomi down next to Saito.

Saito really wanted to go after Kodo, but... he also couldn't leave her in this condition on her own. Kiyomi put her arm around his waist and closed her eyes, falling asleep right away.

Chizuru paused a moment before she spoke. ' ' Hajime... I talked to Chikage. We both had an idea. Kodo will leave... Kiyomi alone... and everyone... if Kiyomi would be pregnant. I know it is hard on you but... if we want to protect the girl who is loved by all of us...' ' said CHizuru softly. ' ' I will help with her... with her health... with her diet... everything.' '

"... what good is it... that he leaves her alone... if it only kills her in the end?" Saito answered, becoming embittered upon such a prospect.

Chizuru look at Saito. ' ' Hajime. Your sister... there were diseases there and... she hadn't enough food... not too mention, she was a human. Kiyomi has none of those three. She will have a healthy pregnancy.' '

"Even you had difficulty."

' ' I was carrying twins and I am small. Kiyomi is lucky she has the building of her father. She will have it much easier then I do.' ' smiled Chizuru.

"I can't take the risk. I'll just stay by her side and protect her."

' ' What if she gets accidentally pregnant?' ' asked Chizuru. ' ' Like it happened with Osen. She forgot her tea.' '

"... then I just... won't..."

' ' If you think not going to... or pulling out will work, you are wrong.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' Remember that one time that Sannan caught us? I didn't finished and here you go... I became father of a healthy twin.' ' said Hijikata.

' ' Toshi, they didn't to know!' ' said Chizuru ashamed, totally red beet. Kosuzu was giggling at her niece.

"I meant... that I don't need to do it at all."

They didn't say anything... They couldn't say anything. But what they didn't know that Kiyomi ahd awoken but had kept her eyes closed when she heard the conversation...

She sat up and look at him... ' ' Nothing... I...I...I am...am... not like your sister!' ' she shouted and runs away from the room.

Saito grabbed his weapon and hurried to get up, even despite the pain he couldn't let her go out alone, except he stumbled by the door and choked up blood, splattering the floor as he hurried after her. No

way could he let her gone alone.

"Hajime-kun!" Souji also got up to go after them.

Hijikata stood up as well and grabbed his sword and went after them. Kiyomi hurried to their room and dropped down on the futon and cried.

A hand grabbed Saito's arm and he struggled to shrug it off, puking up more of the dark liquid that looked more like coffee grounds than anything else.

"Saito knock it off and go back! I'll get her!" Shinpachi scolded him and Souji stopped nearby.

"Let me go. If I can't even walk a short distance than I am of no use to anyone!" Saito shot back, and Shinpachi scowled, but let him go.

Hijikata huffed and dropped on one of his knees and caught up blood.

Kiyomi cried her heart out. She had seen how happy Souji and Kosuzu were when Isamu was born and nothing more... she wanted to the same for her and Hajime to bless their relationship.

Shinpachi glanced at Hijikata, if even Hijikata couldn't take it. He raised his sheathed blade and smashed Saito over the back of the head with it, sending him to the ground within an instant.

"Sorry, but you're too stubborn any other way."

Kosuzu and Chizuru came running. "' You men are so stubborn!'" said Chizuru.

Sanosuke lifted up Saito. "' Shinpachi, talk with Kiyomi.'" and brough Saito back to the room. Kosuzu was supported Souji and Chizuru Hijikata, also back to the room.

Shinpachi looked confused. "What the hell am I talking about?"

"' You are the ladies man.'" said Sanosuke over his shoulder.

Souji started "I'll tal-" Shinpachi shoved his sword into Souji's gut before he could finish.

"No way, idiot. You're as bad off as those two."

"' I think Shinpachi is the right man, right now for her.'" said Chizuru.

Shinpachi headed on to the room and knocked lightly.

She was still crying but answered. "' Yy-you c-c-can...e-e-enter..'" she stamled through her tears.

Shinpachi winced at that sound, but opened the door and closed it behind him. "Ah... hey there... the weather today is... comfy."

She looked down to the ground. "' It's... so unfair...'"

"What is?" Shimpachi still didn't know what had happened.

' 'Because... Hajime... is scared...that I get pregnant...an die of it... He...he doesn't want children...nor... he want... to make... love with. ... me anymore... He...is terrified... I get... pregnant... But I want to... When ...When.. Uncle Souji became father... his smile...and the little bundle in his arms. I wanted that too... I want to bless our relationship too... And now is Aunt osen pregnant... I feel so miserable and jealous... They have something I can't have with the man I love.' '

"Well... then you just have to make him... unscared... or go with Souji's plan and get him drunk... uh, not that I mean to do that... but... either way... just... I'm sure things will work out. But he does care about you if he doesn't want to lose you."

' ' Mother ...and Father... tried to tell ...not too be afraid...'' she kept crying. ' ' And how... it will... happen... if he ...don't...even...want... too...touch me...any...'' She was so upset that the snot was dripping from her nose. ' ' I know...he...cares... I know...'' '

Shimpachi winced again and all he could do was sit near her and pat her back lightly. While Saito on the other hand, he hadn't stayed down for long, he was back up, but not moving at all.

What he really felt like doing was going out, he would wait for the right time, especially now... even if it cost his life... he needed to kill Kodo.

' ' I am...going to clean.. my face.' ' said Kiyomi and stood up and opened the door. ' ' I am going to the water source in the garden.' '

"Better wait for me." Shimpachi said. "You can't go on your own."

She nodded and opened the door and saw that Shimpachi was following her. Mamoru was having patrol near the source. What he didn't know that Kaoru was standing behind him with a gun. Kaoru wanted to punish mamoru for killing their messenger.

' ' MAMORU!'' called Kiyomi and pushed him away and at that moment... Kaoru pulled the trigger and hit Kiyomi.

Shimpachi let out a yell of rage and drew his blade. "You bastard coward face me! Capture him alive!"

Mamoru was quick and grabbed Kaoru from aside and locked him so he couldn't escape. Shimpachi started forward with his drawn blade, no, he personally would take this worthless bastard.

Mamoru pulled on Kaoru's hair. ' ' You bastard! We will send you like your assassin to hell... in pieces!'' he growled.

Kiyomi didn't move... her body was in pain... She was hit above her scapula. She only saw... that the grass became red. Saito and Souji had both stumbled out in a hurry with there blades drawn until they



saw the scene... and that pushed Saito completely over the edge, he grabbed the reins of a soldier's horse and the man was forced to dismount in a hurry as Saito headed off, that was it... it was time for Kodo to pay. He would going to kill him, and not a single person would stop him.

Hijikata came as well on the noise and saw...' Kiyomi!' he called and fell on his knees and picked her up.

' Father... it hurts...' she said quietly.

' My girl...' said Hijikata.

' I protected... Mamoru... he wanted to kill... Mamoru...' she said and Hijikata hugged her.

' Souji, I need you help... I am to weak to lift her up on my own.' Souji came over to help, he had a bad feeling. ' Sanosuke, go after Saito!' called Hijikata and Sanosuke nodded calling his squad and Saito's and went after him.

Saito meanwhile had arrived at the lake, drawing his blade. "You come out and face me like a man..."

Kodo appeared behind him and Saito let out a surprised breath, barely avoiding the blade that sliced along his back, with a familiar burn of silver. Saito retaliated and fought back, their swords clashing, but... Saito's blade had long been through too much and as the blades met once more his broke in half.

Kodo laughed in amusement. "I don't suppose I could appease your common sense and ask for you to give me the girl without a fight and save your own life."

The reply was for Saito to try and attack with half a blade, even if it was all he had left, but Saito had become sloppy in his fighting, because he had become outraged and the next clash of blades... sealed both their fates.

Chizuru pulled out the bullet. She frowned... it was intact and... it had just a few splinter of silver in it... then why was Kiyomi in such pain...until it hit her and looked at her daughter. She was pregnant, the first stadia of a female demon in her pregnancy... being over-sensitive...

Sanosuke arrived at the lake and saw Saito. Silently Saito sat near a pile of ash and only a skull and a few bones remained, but he hadn't moved an inch, still holding into his broken sword and also with his other hand a wound at his chest.

"It's too late."

' No Saito!' said sanosuke and runs to him. ' Don't you dare! You supposed to get married with the girl you love. Getting a family.'

"I wish it were possible. The blade has touched my heart. Once I pull the blade out... my life will end." So as to avoid his death coming immediately had had refrained from moving. "but it's safe now... so... and also since I... can't give her a family... it's better she finds

someone to make her happy who can..."

'Don't... don't do it... She will go after you...she will.' said Sanosuke and teared up his clock and bandaged Saito. 'Besides... I heard Chizuru and Osen talking the other day... There is a change Kiyomi already is...'

"I don't want that... please take care of her. Even if it's difficult. We have to carry on..." Saito lowered his head a bit. "I can't... move... so... please present the head of our enemy to the Vice Commander for me..."

'No... I won't leave you here.' said Sanosuke.

'Hajime!' was heard and it was Heisuke and he pulled out a bottle with golden liquid in it.

'This...the same stuff... that Hijikata had taken when he was almost dead... and turned him in a full demon. It is the water of Life, a secret ingredient and... Kiyomi's blood. Chizuru made this for you.'

"Then... if you believe it... after I pull this... administer it quickly..." Saito gripped the sharp blade and pulled with all his strenght, keeping a straight face the entire time, not daring to show even a single moment of pain.

Heisuke gave it right away and spilled it in Saito's mouth, the whole thing. Saito squinted faintly into the sunset through the branches of the shedding cherry blossoms, before he collapsed backwards.

'Saito!' called Sanosuke and heisuke and bent over him. Sanosuke tapped Saito's cheek. 'Come on. You really are a dick if you leave her alone.'

Shinpachi nervously sat outside, no doubt... Hijikata was going to have fun tearing apart that little bastard. He had saved that honor for the Demon Vice Commander himself, as it was his daughter the rat had defiled.

Kaoru was tiedup and Hijikata hit almost the lights out of him. 'Stay awake!' he commanded. 'So you liked to touch my daughter?' he growled and took out his small knife and cut the fabric away near Kaoru's manhood. 'But you did it with your hands so it seems you don't need this...' said Hijikata and cut his thing off, Kaoru was yelling his lungs out of his body.

Shinpachi wondered if they'd find Saito and bring him back on time or if he'd gotten too far from them already. No doubt, Saito had felt guilty over what happened with her and would welcome death as punishment for allowing her to be harmed when he made a promise.

Chizuru hadn't told anyone yet. She had tested Kiyomi's blood and she was indeed pregnant.

Shinpachi rubbed his eyes and sighed. "Damn it..."

Hijikata opened the door, cleaning his katana. I'm going after Saito.

Shinpachi... keep an eye here.'

"That guy isn't going anywhere I don't suppose..." Shinpachi nodded.

' When I killed him he burned into ashes.' said Hijikata and mounted his horse and ran off.

Shinpachi looked surprised Hijikata killed him so quickly and glanced into the door, unfortunately... he couldn't feel sorry for the man that had done that to Kiyomi.

Hijikata was so fast as he can and found Sanosuke and Heisuke. Sanosuke holding Saito. Hijikata jumped from his horse and walked to them and went on his knees and took Saito over.

' What are you doing? You are supposed to be my son very soon.' he said softly. The only thing about Saito that stirred was his hair in a breeze. ' Hajime... wake up... You can't just die...' said Hijikata. ' HAJIME!' he shouted as his hair turned white and his eyes golden, letting out all his feelings. Sanosuke and Heisuke were covering them self, so much power came free from Hijikata. It seemed the breeze and the potion stirred at Hijikata's power. ' Come back or I will follow you in after life to bring you back, dammit!' called Hijikata out. ' You are supposed to be my son! Chizuru's son! My son's brother and my daughter's husband!' he shouted and his aura became even bigger.

Saito clenched a fist over his broken blade suddenly, the potion finally started to bubble inside and work. Sanosuke and Heisuke were watching a miracle. The cherry blossoms petals what had covered the ground were swirling around them.

' Come back...and live with us!' shouted Hijikata, shedding tears that was falling on Saito's face.

Saito slowly peeked an eye open, though it was a bit squinted.

Hijikata placed his head on Saito's, still not noticing. ' My boy...' whispers Hijikata

"I... got... Kodo's head... for you..." Saito muttered quietly.

Hijikata looked up and saw his eyes half open. Hijikata calmed down and smiled faintly. ' You idiot.' he said and pulled Saito in a tight hug. Saito inhaled a long breathe, wincing faintly, but hiding that pained look in his shoulder. ' Sorry.' said Hijikata. ' Heisuke, get Kodo's head. We are going home.' smiled Hijikata and lifted up Saito.

"My blade broke..."

' Then I know what I will give you a new one when you become officially my son.' smiled Hijikata as he went on his horse with Saito and went home with the others.

"The feel of its weight. The beautiful handcraft on its sheath. The more I think of it, the more restless I feel."

Shinpachi glanced up when he heard the familiar sound of horses approaching.

' ' We are home.' ' said Hijikata. Mamoru was waiting as well. ' ' Father. Kiyomi is doing well and resting in her room.' '

"What happened?" Shinpachi asked, Saito looked beat up and tired, but he was alive.

' ' Fatherly love...' ' said Sanosuke with a relieved smile. ' ' He saved Saito.' '

' ' And mother love... because Chizuru did as welll...' ' said Heisuke.

"Saved? EHhh..." Shinpachi looked confused, but despite the incident, Saito did look distressed to some degree still.

Hijikata came down from his horse with Saito in his arms went to his and Kiyomi's room and went inside. He lay Saito next to Kiyomi, who was sleeping. Chizuru was checking Saito right away, since she was with kiyomi.

"I shouldn't be here..." Saito protested, also because he was filthy with that man's blood on him.

' ' You should... She loves you in good and bad times.' ' said Chizuru. Hijikata stood up and brough the bowl with water to Saito and started to clean his face. Saito made a face, it felt like he was getting cleaned by a mother cat. ' ' Yea, make that face...Hajime... make that face.' ' smirked Hijikata.

' ' Besides... you need to take care of her.' ' said CHizuru.

"I really can't face her... after breaking another promise..."

' ' Not even when she is carrying your child? She is a week pregnant.' '

"... I..." He looked dumbfounded and also extremely worried.

' ' I checked her blood... and she is doing very fine so the baby as well. Don't worry...really.' ' said Chizuru.

He folded his hands in his lap and stared at them. At this moment he really needed to move, get up, do something. "Please excuse me a moment... I... I need a drink."

' ' You..stay here. I will get sake.' ' said Hijikata and stood up.

>Chizuru took Saito's hands in hers. ' ' Hajime... look at me. Nothing... will... happen. Alot people here... will keep an eye on here... She won't do anything... She will rest the whole day and get healthy food. I will check her everyday. If it is needed, I will even wash her so she won't get tired.' '<p>

Saito sighed nervously. "Still... I... I should..." actually he didn't know what he should do, all he wanted was out of this stuffy room. He couldn't face her. He couldn't. He couldn't.

Suddenly two arms hugged him from behind and a head was felt on his back. '' Welcome back, Hajime. I love you. ''

Except he was too nervous to say anything, why was she even welcoming him back? He had committed treason against her so why?

'' Is Mamoru doing well? '' asked Kiyomi.

'' Yes, thanks to you. If you didn't had him pushed away, he would have been shot in his head and he would be dead. '' said Chizuru.

'' I am glad... My brother is doing well. '' Saito was still silent, mind running quickly. Kiyomi hugged him tighter. '' Live with me... Hajime. I can't live without you... ''

"I already betray you by breaking another promise..."

'' A relationship... just exist in one promise... loving each other... and if we do that... more we can imagine. I will be a bad lover if I don't want you anymore because... you couldn't keep it. Hajime, I want you and no one else. ''

"But if I can't protect you... I am not worth your time." And she had also run from him earlier... so that was more telling than anything else.

''I jumped for Mamoru. If I didn't... I woldn't have a brother anymore...'' she said. She closed her arms around him. '' And I have been thinking... I will adopt a cat and treat it as my baby. Even if we don't make love... I still want your kisses and hugs. ''

He gave a startled look, she didn't know it yet? But worse, he'd driven her to such a behavior, all the more reason he should stay away from her for her own good.

'' I love you... more than anything. I acted selfish and I apologize for it. '' she said and bowed. '' I want to be mrs. Saito. I want to stand in the kitchen to make your meals. I want to wait everyday so I can welcome you back from work. ''

"Don't. I'm the only one at fault." She wasn't acting as her usual self it seemed.

'' Hajime... she is very sensitive now... '' said Chizuru, warning him.

Saito shut up and decided to not speak at all, he only made things worse it seemed. Really he felt very uncomfortable in this situation, glancing down, he took notice of the rips in his uniform and especially the large one aside his heart, which had almost killed him instantly, he thought perhaps... it'd have been better that way.

Kiyomi hugged him and lay her head on his heart. '' I don't want to be alone again. '' She heard his heart beating and smiled. '' I love it's beat... '' He lowered his head, still filled with guilt. '' Please... don't feel guilty... I jumped for Mamoru. I decided to protect him. It had nothing to do with your promise because you weren't there at that moment. Losing a sibling... my twin brother...

the thought already...' she said. ' He is my only brother...'

He sighed quietly and nodded. She placed a soft kiss on his lips. ' Bad and Good times, I want to always be there for you... even if we have fights. But they say that keeps a relationship healthy.' she smiled faintly.

"You took my words out of context... I had only meant... that I would prefer to abstain myself over losing you."

' Sorry... I understand how much you care for me... and... I care alot for you...so much... that I didn't see anymore what I was doing. I wanted to make you better and live on... like we want...' He turned towards her and set a hand over her stomach lightly. How was it possible? It must have happened the first time despite his efforts. She look what he was doing and saw his hand on her stomach. ' Hajime...?' she wondered what he was doing.

"I don't want to lose you..." His voice and expression clearly showed all he was feeling. "I'm afraid."

She placed her hands on his cheeks. ' I will be careful... really... when the times comes that I would be pregnant... I will sleep everyday two hours extra, and I will eat healthy things. I won't work... so in that way...I can make you less worried...' she said softly.

"Then you better hurry and start now..."

' What... do you mean?'

"Because... my worry already came true... so please be careful from now on..."

Her eyes went wide. ' I-I am? Really?' she asked and looked at her mother and she nodded.

' The day you came back from Kodo... and I gave you the tea... you have thrown it up a half hour after it... Then it won't work...especially not when you make love... and take the other one at late in the morning...' said CHizuru.

Kiyomi look at Saito... ' I...I...' she touched her stomach and shed a tear. ' Our baby...'

Saito sighed quietly, he was going to be even more protective now than he had ever been, he wouldn't leave her side for a second.

' Hajime... we... we are going to be parents...' she said and hugged him.

He wasn't sure how to feel about it, it was a conflicting situation for him.

' Huuuhhh... Now I feel old.' said Hijikata, joking around. Chizuru smiled.

Kiyomi kissed his cheek. ' I will lay down...' she said and put her head on the pillow. ' But you need to carry me then if I need to use the bathroom or eating dinner.' she said.

"That's fine..." It was worth it if it kept her safe.

She opens her arms, inviting him to lay with her. Chizuru stood up and walked to Hijikata. '' It's up to you when you want to tell the others.'' said Hijikata and they left the room and closed the door. He glanced at the door and sighed, he was very worried.

'' Hey, I feel good. Really. If it were me, I would have danced around, hearing... that I carry a baby... but I won't...'' she said softly with a faint smile.

He let out a breath, trying to calm himself She grabbed his arm and pulled him down and kissed him deep, stroking his hair backwards. It made him forget all his worries, just for a few moments. She held him close against her and gave him deep kisses on his lips. He thought about it and decided it was probably best to keep his weight off her, not wanting to put it on her stomach at all.

'' Do...do you want to tell the others? If you do... they will all keep an eye on me.'' she smiled a bit.

"It is up to you..."

'' Will it make you less worried... if I tell them? Uncle Shinpachi, uncle Kazama and uncle Souji... No doubt they will want to keep me safe as well.''

"It won't stress you out more?"

'' So long they won't ask me every five minutes how I am doing, I will be fine.''

"I might."

She smiled and kissed lightly his lips. '' So... with dinner, shall I use your chest as support?'' she said.

"If you need to."

'' I will sit close to you.'' she said and snuggled against him.

"Or I could bring you dinner... it could get dangerous in there..." A scenario crossed his mind and his eye twitched. Shinpachi and Heisuke fighting over fish, then somehow falling and injuring here and the baby... no. He wouldn't have it!

'' I can sit next to my father and you at the other side... '' she said softly.

'' DINNER! ONE BIG FEAST! KOSUZU AND SANOSUKE COOKED TOFU AND FISH DISHES!'' shouted Heisuke happy.

"... that could still be dangerous..."

'' Let's try...one time...please?'' she asked.

He sighed. "Very well..."

Kiyomi put her arms around Hajime and kissed his cheek. In that way





' ' Is that why... you asked not to fight, Hijikata?' ' asked Heisuke and Hijikata nodded.

' ' Also because of Osen, we now have two pregnant woman here...' '

Saito blinked several times, staring at Souji. They made a plan...?

' ' Come on, Souji told you many time to make him drunk...' ' said Heisuke. Kiyomi gave him a deathglare.

' ' It happened even before you guys came up with it!' ' she said angry. ' ' Now it happened because we love each other... and it came as a suprise. Don't spoil the moment!' ' she said.

"Ah, too bad, you'd have enjoyed it." Souji commented.

' 'Souji, you are working up Kiyomi. Drop it.' ' said Hijikata.

"How is that working up? I only said it would be fun-...whoa!" Souji barely avoided the chopsticks which embedded themselves into the wall mere inches from his face. "Ah, Hajime-kun that was dangerous. Did you slip?"

' ' Souji.. I think you should stop. Hajime is worried.' ' said Kosuzu softly.

"I slipped. My mistake." Saito acknowleged, but it was clear to both it was no slip, non the less Souji found himself more than amused.

Chizuru put their plate in front of them and gave Kiyomi a tea that smelled sweet.

' ' What is this?' ' asked Kiyomi.

' ' It's tea for the baby. Me, osen and kosuzu, we took it all so the baby would grow and turn strong.' ' smiled Chizuru.

Saito himself picked up a small cup of sake and drank it, though over the edge of the cup kept sharp, cat like eyes on Souji's fox like grin.

' ' So... are we going to call you grandpa Hijikata?' ' asked sanosuke and Heisuke and Mamoru were laughing seeing Hijikata's face.

Shinpachi inched closer and Saito visably tensed. "So, do we have names yet?"

Kiyomi held Saito's hand. ' ' It's alright. Names... well...' ' she said and flushed suddenly. ' ' I have one...I mean... I always liked this name...' '

Shinpachi started at Saito a minute, keeping a steady distance, just because he seemed rabid right now.

' ' Do you want to tell us?' ' asked Osen.

Kiyomi look at Saito. '' Shall I tell?''

"It's fine, since even I don't know." Saito replied, though he kept an eye on Shinpachi, Heiskue and Souji... those were his troublemakers.

'' I...if I have...a boy... I want to call him Kazuki. It means peaceful hope.'' she said softly.

"Huh, so then it's Saito Kazuki." Shinpachi thought on it. "Yeah, that makes sense. Sounds like a sword maker's name."

Kiyomi smiled, hearing Shinpachi and look at Saito. '' Do you like the name?'' she asked.

"A sword... artist name..." Saito went to think on this, yes, if that were the case he would be more than pleased to have his son making fine blades.

Kiyomi saw the look in his eyes and kissed his cheek. '' So Katsumi and Kazuki... And we have Isamu already... It will become lively.'' smiled Sanosuke.

'' Oh! Chikage doesn't know it yet...' ' said Osen.

"Ahh, he'll string up Hajime-kun hearing that won't he?" Souji seemed amused again.

'' Uncle Souji...' ' growled Kiyomi, for the first time she let hear her demon growl.

"What?" Souji seemed as though he saw nothing wrong with it, when the door opened and the very subject of their conversation entered.  
"Speak of the devil!"

'' Chikage...' ' smiled Osen. '' Your food is still warm.'' she said.

"I have heard that the mutt has destory Kodo..." That was his first interest. "I am displeased I was unable to do it myself, however... I am glad there is no longer a threat to our bloodline."

'' He is not a mutt anymore, he is like me...' ' said Hijikata.

"What is that?" Kazama questioned.

'' Hajime is like me, a full demon. He was on the edge of death... but with my energy as trigger and Chizuru's medicine... He turned into a full fledged demon like me.''

"Hmmm... interesting." Kazama mused, staring at them.

'' And... someone else is pregnant like me.'' said Osen.

"... already...?" Kazama glanced at her, they went through with the plan so quickly?

'' I am a week... it happened when I was freed from Kodo's grasp.'' said kiyomi.

"..." Kazama misunderstood the situation, thinking it was from Kodo.

' ' It's from Hajime!' ' when she saw his look. ' ' He...was soothing my pain... Making me his again since... Kaoru...touched me...' ' she said softly. ' ' We never planned it but it is here... our little one.' '

"I see. I that's the case..." Kazama was a bit curious how the child would turn out, this had never happened before in the history of oni.

Kiyomi buried with a smile in Hajime's neck. ' ' It feels...good to say our little one.' '

Even Kazama could take note of Saito's body language. He seemed very on edge, but Kazama could only guess the reasons, he wasn't stupid.

' ' Well, since there is a little one there that needs to grow.' ' said Sanosuke and stood up with his bowl of vegetables. ' ' You need more vegetables...' ' he said and approach calm and sat down and pushed the bowl towards Saito. Saito didn't tense around Sano, however, because he knew Sano wasn't the hyper jerky type like the others.

' ' Can I give it to her?' ' asked Sanosuke to Saito.

"It's fine."

Sanosuke gave the bowl to Kiyomi and pet her head. ' ' If you need something, call me and I am there for you and for Hajime.' ' smiled Sanosuke.

"Ah! No fair, you're fine with Sano!" Shinpachi complained.

' ' Shinpachi, don't make a ruckus, two pregnant woman here.' ' said Sanosuke calm and stood up and went back to his place.

' ' Aunt Osen, how do you know you get a girl?' ' asked Mamoru, wondering because she kept saying the girls name.

' ' Because I want one.' ' said Osen.

' ' Is it that simple?' ' wondered mamoru.

"Of course. If she wants one that is what she will get." Kazama replied, but only because he did his best to spoil Osen he had utmost confidence the universe would as well.

' ' Hhmmmm...' ' said Mamoru still thinking.

Kiyomi finished her two bowl of vegetables, her fish and tofu. She put her chopsticks down, leaving the rice over.

Saito calmed his nerves with several drinks, because he saw no other way to calm his worry.

' ' Saito... if you drink so much... and carry Kiyomi back... you can drop her...' ' said Heisuke carefully.

"I won't." Saito refused the prospect.

' ' And I know how to break a fall... Uncle Heisuke.' ' said Kiyomi and she yawned.

Saito sighed, honestly did they think he was clumsy? Kiyomi lay her head against his arm and closed her eyes.

Hijikata sat next to Saito and put a hand on his shoulder. ' ' Hajime makes sure he will become the best dad in the world, no doubt. I got faith in you, son.' '

Saito looked surprised, because he was a bit afraid of both the risk of death and becoming a father. He hadn't been sure if he would do good, but if Hijikata had faith in him.

' ' Don't give me that look..' ' said Hijikata and ruffled through his hair. ' ' It is the most beautiful thing, being a dad, even it can be hard.' '

"I understand."

' ' It looks our young mother is sleeping... ' ' said Mamoru and indeed, Kiyomi was breathing softly.

He glanced at her briefly. "I'll excuse us now."

' ' Alright.' ' said Hijikata.

He picked her up to take her back, taking care to stay away from everyone.

' ' Aaahhh.. Now we can make baby clothes together.' ' said Osen happily.

"Hmmm." Kazama kept an eye on Saito, he personally didn't like her being carried by a drunkard.

Kiyomi snuggled against his chest. He carefully took her to their room and made sure she was comfortable, there was no way she would have even the faint discomfort during this time. She rolled on her side and kept sleeping, breathing softly.

Time ticked by as it was getting a bit colder, yet Osen and Kiyomi were in the garden, sewing. Osen was almost near her time to give labor... while Kiyomi had a beautiful belly of five months old.

"Hajime-kun is like her shadow. All over everywhere she walks."

Kiyomi smiled. ' ' Weren't you the same with aunt Kosuzu?' ' she said.

"Not like this."

Kiyomi wanted to say something if she made a surprised face and look at her belly.

"What is it? Is something wrong?!" Saito immediately stepped forward and Souji winced, geez, he'd never heard Saito shout in panic like that before.

"Easy on the ears, Hajime-kun."

Kiyomi took Saito's hand, placed it on her belly and a hard kick was felt. And another one. "' It is kicking... and hard.'" she said.

"But nothing is wrong...?" He still looked a bit worried.

"' No... the baby kicked for the first time...' she said. "' I was so surprised... I never thought it would be this hard.'"

He sighed of relief, the tension that had been so clearly visible, slowly went away.

"' Kiyomi... show me your belly.'" said Osen and Kiyomi did. "' Ooh such a beautiful belly... so round. Mine looks like a mochi.'" she said and Kiyomi giggled.

Souji would have tested it, but he had a feeling Saito would cut an arm off if he tried to feel a kick.

"' Hajime... can Uncle Souji feel it as well?'" asked Kiyomi. Saito muttered something under his breath and Souji took that as a yes, regardless of his devious nature he wouldn't endanger her. "' Place your hand here.'" said Kiyomi and pointed on a spot on her belly.

Souji set his hand there and waited. And there it was, a hard kick again. "Ah, look at that little fighter."

"' I believe he just made a little salto in my belly.'" Souji smirked, clearly wanting to give some comment, but he refrained. "' The sun feels good on my belly.'" said Kiyomi and she relaxed against the tree. The sun was just reaching her belly.

"' I wish I could sit carefree like that but no...' said Osen. "' Chikage won't like it either.'"

Saito was still muttering to himself, he had taken up a spare sword, he despised the weight and feel of it, but he had no time to acquire a well-made one. This was just for protection during this time.

Hijikata came back with Kondo and Mamoru, having meeting with some lords. Hijikata held a long package in his hand. "' Hajime, Sanosuke and I... we let the blacksmith make a brand new katana. He used a sample of your old metal to make exactly the same one... brand new.'"

"I see... it will be better than this old thing. It's entirely unbalanced."

"' I... This is embarrassing...' said Hijikata and he flushed a bit. "' A long time ago when I first met you... and were fighting... you... inspired me and I wrote a Haiku about it... I let it engrave in the metal... a gift... because this happened to me when I saw you

fight:

\_'' Warrior have drawn me in\_  
><em>Your loyalty enters me<em>  
><em>making my heart beat''<em>

He gave the sword to hajime.

Saito looked startled by the comment, but also deeply touched. "I... am honored..."

Hijikata pulled Hajime in a hug and...buried his nose in his hair.

>'' Group hug!'' said Mamoru and hugged them as well.<p>

Kondo sat next to Souji and was smiling brightly. "Tch. Those guys." Souji leaned his chin on his hand.

Kondo hugged Souji. '' Come on... We are a nice stick together family...''

"Oh, well if Kondo-san says it's fine..." Souji perked up.

'' Grandpa! Look what mommy bought for me!'' called Isamu, running with a colorful ball.

"Would you look at that."

'' Pretty, isn't daddy?'' said Isamu happy.

'' Aunt Osen, are you okay?'' asked Mamoru when he saw Osen making a face.

'' Bathroom.'' she said and stood up but then her water broke.  
>'' Oh dear...'' she said, very calm. '' Chikage! Your daughter is coming!'' she called.<p>

Kazama stepped out with a casual face. "I see, then let us meet her." He hurried and helped her to their room.

Chizuru and Kosuzu came running with towels and water. Sanosuke, Heisuke, Shinpachi arrived as well and everyone was waiting. Saito looked on, faintly worried, this sort of thing was making him nervous.

Kiyomi held his hand. '' It will be fine.'' she said softly.

"Of course..." he hoped.

After two hours a baby cry filled the room. '' Congratz, Chikage.'' said Hijikata.

Saito regardless still seemed nervous over the incident, things were strange in this situation.

Kosuzu opened the door. '' Osen and katsumi are doing well. You may see her, Chikage-san.'' she said.

Kazama stepped in right away, not being entirely patient to wait much longer. Osen lay on the futon and on her chest was a tiny girl with

blond hair and red eyes... There was no doubt, Kazama was pleased with the perfect family blood line.

' ' Did... I do alright?' ' asked osen softly.

"You always do right. Are you happy?"

She nodded with a smile and pulled him down to give him a kiss. ' ' Katsumi is honoring her name perfectly.' ' Truth to be told, it wasn't all about blood line to him, that was just an added bounus, he truly loved his family. ' ' Our family is complete now.' ' said Osen. Chizuru left the room.

' ' And?' ' asked Hijikata. ' ' A healthy baby girl and Osen is doing as well, a bit tired but that is normal. She is really shining, to have a babygirl.' ' said Chizuru.

Saito was a little relaxed to hear things went well at least.

' ' She was quick too... Kenichi took nine hours...' ' said Sanosuke. ' ' Even you were faster with Mamoru and Kiyomi.' '

Saito sighed and Souji smiled, how amusing to see his looks change back and forth.

' ' HHmmm five hours... Mamoru first and a half hour later Kiyomi...' ' said Chizuru.

Saito thought for a few moments, that had been such a long time ago.

' ' Well, my baby is still here in my warm womb.' ' said Kiyomi and hugged her belly.

He briefly glanced at her, if only that wasn't the source of his stress. Kiyomi was calm and did like she had promised everyday. And time flew by before she was almost at her time to give birth. Just two weeks to go.

It was night and she lay close against Hajime. It was autumn and chilly. Her belly was nicely rounded and she wished she could stay like this forever. Saito for the most part was afraid to touch her roughly, so he usually kept his hands to himself, lest he accidentally bump her stomach.

Kiyomi opened her eyes, her stomach felt weird... it was stinging lightly until a sharp pain hit her stomach. ' ' hajime... Hajime... the baby...it's coming.' '

"What?!" No, now wasn't the time to panic, now was the critical moment that was most terrifying. "I'll get your mother."

She nodded and tried to relax and was breathing calmly. Saito hurriedly ran down the hall and knocked on the door, doing his utmost to keep his face calm, though inside his mind was racing in panic.

' ' Who is there?' ' asked Hijikata, even he was in a deep sleep, he always woke up by the knock on a door or something else.

"It's me... it's time..."

Chizuru woke up hearing him and went jumped up like Hijikata and took her small bag with needed supplies. They opened the door and Chizuru ran to their room.

' ' OSEN! KOSUZU! IT'S TIME!' ' shouted Hijikata and ran as well to their room. Kosuzu woke up and woke up Souji.

' ' Chikage, take Katsumi with you.' ' said Osen and left the room.

Kazama took his daughter and stepped outside with her, earning Saito's worried glance. "Do not give such a worried look. Hurry and go."

' ' is it time?' ' asked Sanosuke yawning. Kosuzu and Osen ran towards their room with water and towels and closed the door.

Mamoru sat next to Hijikata and yawned. ' ' Night... couldn't the baby wait and come in the morning when everyone is awake...?' '

"It's Hajime-kun's baby, of course he'll be inconvenient in his coming." Souji teased, though he still had a smile.

' ' She is ready to push. Push Kiyomi!' ' called Chizuru. It was even heard outside.

' ' Whoa, that fast?' ' wondered Heisuke.

"He's eager to get out so his father will stop brooding around." Souji added.

Hijikata even needed to laugh. ' ' Yes it seems you are right, Souji.' ' Saito glanced at them, weren't they worried.

' ' The baby is not that low yet. Kiyomi stop pushing.' ' said Chizuru.

' ' I can't... I can't stop...' ' she groaned.

Unable to contain himself he paced back and forth uneasily. Suddenly kiyomi gave a yell of pain. there was a heavy contraction that she even through her whole body.

' ' This is not good, she is too tense.' ' said Chizuru and stood up.  
' ' Osen, keep an eye on her. I am going to get something.' '

Chizuru opened the door half and ran out, her arms under clear liquid and blood. Saito let out a sound of frustration and ruffled a hand through his hair.

' ' There is always blood with a labor.' ' said Hijikata, trying to calm Saito down.

"That much?"

' ' Yes.' ' said Hijikata. Chizuru came back running with something in her hands and went in the room and closed the door.



' ' Take this, it soothes the pain.' ' said Chizuru and Kiyomi took it.  
' ' Push Kiyomi!' ' said Chizuru and a groan followed of Kiyomi.

He wondered if everyone in the room could hear the terrified pounding of his heart.

' ' Keep pushing...' ' said Chizuru. ' ' I see something...' '

"How long has it been? Hours?" Saito was never one to be impatient, but now he was. He was too worried and continued pacing.

' ' Just fourty minutes...Aniki.' ' said Mamoru.

Suddenly Osen laughed. ' ' My Kiyomi, keep that for Hajime will you.' ' Hijikata raised a brow, what was that?

' ' I see the head...' ' said Chizuru.

Fourty minutes? It was hard to believe. And there it was... the baby cry and loud. Saito lost standing strenght and Souji grabbed him by the arm to help him. Was it relief? Was she fine? After ten minutes the door opened. It was Osen.

' ' Both are doing fine... Kiyomi...and Kazuki.' '

"They're fine? They're fine..." All that stress he felt... was for nothing. He slowly started towards the door, with the help of a shove from Souji. Kiyomi was laying down and staring and the little boy on her chest. He had Hajime's hair with small curls in the end. It was true... they were fine. Kiyomi placed a light kiss on her son's head. He was perfect. He slowly sat beside her, expression still one of amazement that everything had gone fine.

She look up. ' ' Hajime... I told you...' ' she said with a faint smile.

"I see... you're fine..."

' ' We have a baby boy...' '

"I see him."

' ' Do you want to hold him?' ' she asked. Hijikata and Mamoru came in and looked from a distance. Hijikata pulled Chizuru against him and kissed her head.

"Yes." Even though he was afraid, he did.

She sat up and placed Kazuki in his arms. ' ' There is daddy.' ' He held him carefully in his arms and glanced down at him, that was the moment he was sure he would never love another thing as much as he loved his son. Kiyomi gave Saito a kiss on his cheek. ' ' Thank you for giving us such a beautiful gift. I love you.' ' He was so relieved that things had turned out fine, he could finally let all of his stress go. Kiyomi put an arm around Saito and touched Kazuki his tiny hand. His eyes went open, bright purple like his mothers. ' ' He is so beautiful...' '

"I..." He wasn't quite sure what to say, it was a strange incident.

' ' Can we take a look?' ' asked Sanosuke with the other behind him.

Saito glanced at her, silently wondering if it were fine with her, to him it was.

' ' Yes... You can look.' ' she said, smiling content. Hijikata and mamoru came forward. Hijikata kissed Kiyomo on her head and then, for the first time, also on Saito's head.

' ' Let me see my grandson.' ' He held his son up for Hijikata to hold him. Hijikata took him carefully and held him. ' ' Hey dumpling.' ' said Hijikata softly. Kiyomi placed her head against Hajime's.

' ' Uncle Souji, look, my nephew.' ' said Mamoru.

"I feel like we're all getting quite old..." Souji mused then glanced at Shinpachi. "Ah, look, grey hair to prove it?"

"What where?!"

Sanosuke and Heisuke were laughing. ' ' Old? You demons will stay long younger than we do.' ' said Sanosuke. Osen took Katsumie from Chikage. Shinpachi was trying to find anything grey in his hair in a hurry.

' ' So...when will be there a second one?' ' asked mamoru and he ducked to avoid a pillow of Kiyomi.

' ' Shut up, monkey. You have no idea how hard it is to press a baby out!'

"That sort of thing isn't possible so soon..." Saito replied, though since he was less worried that his fears had been relieved, he didn't show he was opposed to it.

' ' Ah, but it is easier to get a baby in, isn't?' ' smirked Mamoru.

>' ' Hahahahaha hear our second Souji...' ' laughed Heisuke.<p>

Saito sighed, honestly, these ones.

' ' Mamoru...heisuke, leave the room.' ' said Hijikata. ' ' It's an order.' ' And so, those two left. Hijikata look at the baby. ' ' You are really a Saito... I see it already...' ' he smiled faintly.

"Hmm?" Saito did seem faintly confused. Was he that much like him?

Hijikata smiled at him. Kiyomi lay back and sighs deep. Chizuru came with a small basket with blankets. ' ' It was a tough night... you three need to rest.' ' said CHizuru.

"I don't quite need the rest." Saito replied, he was fine.

Hiikata gave Kazuki back to Saito. ' ' No but your wife and child do.'

"Yes. I'm aware, but I want to stay awake and watch over them."

' ' Alright.' ' said Hijikata and stood up. ' ' We will leave you three alone now.' ' he said and everyone left and Hijikata closed the door.

' ' How are you feeling... Hajime?' ' asked kiyomi

"Relieved that you are both alright."

She smiled. ' ' I am happy.' '

"I am as well."

' ' It's so weird... when I was in labor... I thought back...and saw the fourteen year old me... staring at you... gazing at you and though... it won't never happen... and now...we both...are together and have a son.' '

He leaned over and kissed her lightly. She smiled and kissed him softly back. "You should rest."

She nodded and closed her eyes. For now he couldn't sleep, he just wanted to stare at them. Kazuki yawned a bit and made a small sound.

"Look at you..." he said quietly. "who would have thought it possible to love someone at first sight."

Kazuki moved a bit and sighs softly, it was new for a small thing like him. He could do nothing more than gaze at the both of them, a feeling he never experienced, his heart felt as though it might burst, from how much he loved them both.

Not much later, he started to whimper and Kiyomi woke up and took him and started to feed him. ' ' Hey... still awake?' ' she asked softly.

"Yes. I don't want to stop looking at him."

' ' Come here...' ' she said softly.

"Hm?"

' ' I missed you, you know? You were so carefully with me... I want a tight hug from you.' ' she smiled faintly as she held Kazuki while he was drinking.

"Are you sure? Aren't you sore?" He still showed a little concern, though not nearly as much worry as previous.

' ' Downstairs... but for the rest... I am fine...' ' she said softly as she look at Kazuki who was drinking.

"Then I suppose it's fine."

She look at him and smiled. ' ' What a little wonder we have...' '

He didn't expect it at all really. She held Hajime's arm and pulled his against her back and lay his hand softly on Kazuki so he held

both. '' I am blessed with a wonderful husband and a son. I love you, Hajime. ''

Really, he hoped he was able to handle things well, but he had his worries that he wouldn't be good at this family thing. Kazuki was done and Kiyomi rubbed softly over his back. Kazuki let out a small burp. '' that is a good boy. '' she said picked him up gentle and she rolled on her back and lay him on her chest so he was close to Hajime as well. He moved his small hand like he wanted to grab something.

He looked at him curiously and held out a hand to him, still he found it amazing that this was where life came from. Kazuki found Hajime's finger and grabbed it with a small force. Kiyomi smiled, the tiny held holding his father it's finger. He looked a little surprised at the action.

'' He is holding you... ''

"I hope I'll be able to do well."

'' Of course you do. '' she said with confident. '' Because we will do it together... '' she smiled.

He doubted he would sleep tonight, he wanted to keep an eye on them to make sure everything was going to be alright. Kazuki was sleeping already and Kiyomi after ten minutes. Both tired from their adventure. All night he kept an eye on them, nowhere near falling asleep. It was impossible to fall asleep when he was so worried. It was in the morning that Kiyomi woke up from Kazuki who was crying. Saito gave a startled look at the sudden cries, it hadn't been too long had it? He glanced at the window... oh... it had.

'' Sshhhh... '' said Kiyomi and sat up and feed him again. '' Good morning. '' she smiled at Hajime.

"Did you sleep alright?"

'' Yes, very well. '' she said and touched Hajime's face. '' I bet you didn't... ''

"No..."

She smiled. '' We will stay with you, Kazuki and I. Because we have someone who is dear to us... and we love him. ''

"I know." She gave him a morningkiss and smiled faintly. She felt so happy. "I'm glad that you're happy..." Or more or less, he was glad he could give her what she wanted so badly. He had been afraid he wasn't good for her since he didn't think he could give this to her.

'' Don't you feel... less scared now? '' she asked softly.

"I do. Much less, but I still want to watch over you carefully."

'' You always will... '' she said softly. '' And I will watch over you... '' He briefly rubbed at his eyes She put Kazuki on her shoulder and rubbed his and he burped. '' There you go, you had your breakfast. Now Mama and Papa need to eat. ''

"He's so small... how is it possible this small one will become like you or I in mere years?"

' ' Remember me and Mamoru? ' '

"I do... but... this one comes from us..."

' ' Well, let's see him grow up and then we will find our answer. ' '

"It's an amazing thing."

' ' Yes it is. ' ' she said and suddenly her stomach growled loud. ' ' Oops... ' ' she giggled softly.

"I will get you something."

' ' Alright. You are going to eat as well with me? ' '

"Yes. What would you like me to bring you?"

' ' Fish, vegetables, an extra large rice and an egg. ' ' she said. ' ' And I like some refreshed tea. ' '

"Alright." He slowly got up and headed out, briefly glancing back.

Kiyomi was stroking Kazuki's cheek. ' ' One full stomach... ' ' she smiled faintly to him.

He felt a lot calmer and gathered up all the things that she needed and after some long time of carefully preparing her a meal he returned with it. Kazuki lay on the futon while Kiyomi changed his cloth with a fresh one. Saito looked surprised at the little guy as he brought the tray in, he was quite active for such a small one. His small mouth was moving a bit and his fingers as well.

' ' That smells wonderful.. Hajime. ' '

"I think he's eager to try, a shame he has quite awhile to wait first."

She laughed softly. ' ' Maybe he will be addicted to tofu like you. ' ' she smiled.

"Ah... that's possible."

She was done and lay him in the basket that Chizuru had prepared so she could have breakfast. ' ' I am starving. Mother said that's because I am feeding him... ' '

"If that's the case I'll make sure you have everything you need whenever you need it." He was still overprotective. She smiled and took a bite from her breakfast. "Is it well?"

' ' Yes... it taste very good. Thank you. ' ' she said and pecked his cheek.

"I'm glad."

She kept eating and a soft knock was heard. '' Someone awake?'' asked Chizuru softly.

"Yes."

Chizuru opened the door and closed it. '' Good morning. I am going to to check Kiyomi and kazuki.'' she said softly.

He nodded in understanding, hoping there was nothing but good news.

Chizuru checked first Kiyomi. '' You are eating and alot meaning you are feeding him. That's good. Feeling still sore?'' she asked and Kiyomi nodded.

'' Yes, a bit.'' Chizuru smiled and checked then Kazuki,

'' Come to grandma.'' said Chizuru and was cheking him.

He carefully watched the two of them, there was always still a little worry, but it gradually became less and less as his fears were proved wrong.

Kazuki made some sounds and CHizuru smiled. '' He is very healthy... no worries at all for this little warrior.''

It was a good thing to hear, he was glad.

'' Kiyomi, take a bath so Kosuzu can put here a clean futon.'' said Chizuru. '' What about Kazuki?'' asked Kiyomi since she knew saito wanted to keep an eye on her as well.

Saito briefly glanced at her, though not looking worried really.

'' Well, let them spend some father-son time.'' smiled Chizuru and Kiyomi smiled as well.

"Will he be alright being away from her?" Saito questioned, it made him a bit nervous. What if he did something wrong?

'' You know what. Use out private bath. Hajime can sit in our room with Kazuki with the door open while Kiyomi takes a bath. How sound that?'' said Chizuru.

"Is that really fine?"

'' Of course.'' said Chizuru. '' Then both can keep an eye.'' she smiled. '' And no doubt that a proud grandfather will take a peek at his grandson. He told this morning to the squads he became grandfather.''

He nodded in understanding. Chizuru took Kazuki in her arms so Kiyomi could stood up but she whimpers, the pain down was still there and her hands touched her womanhood. '' I never knew... it could be that sore...'' said Kiyomi and Chizuru smiled.

'' When I gave birth to you and brother, I couldn't walk for a week.''Saito did look worried now at hearing that. He wished something could be done. Chizuru took some clean clothes for Kiyomi.

' ' After a bath it will be better.' ' she said.

' ' Hajime... can you...carry me there?' ' asked Kiyomi.

"Yes." He lifted her up to carry her there, he would take care of her to the best of his abilities.

Chizuru opened the door and walked outside with the young parents behind her. ' ' Morning, Kiyomi, Hajime. Did you sleep well?' ' asked Sanosuke.

Saito didn't answer since he hadn't slept and was more interested in lavishing his new family with his utmost attention.

' ' We did.' ' said Kiyomi as they walked further. Chizuru open the door and lay Kazuki on Hijikata's futon.

' ' Take your time.' ' she said and left the room and closed the door.

"Do you need any help...?" He asked quietly once they were alone.

' ' If I am undressed, can you take me to the bathing place... so I can clean before taking a dip in the hotspring.' '

Yes."

She smiled and undressed herself. ' ' I am done.' ' He helped her there carefully, remaining by her side. ' ' Thank you.' ' she said and splashed herself wet and took some soap to wash herself.

"Is there anything else I can help with?"

' ' If you can wash my back...' ' He glanced at their son for a moment, making sure he was fine and comfy, seemed he was just as tired as she was. So he went ahead and helped her get clean. She kept staring at Kazuki while Hajime was cleaning her back. ' ' I still can't believe it... that this little thing was in my belly.' '

"Hm."

' ' We made a beautiful son...' '

"Yeah..." He sighed, it had been rough though to worry for those months.

' ' It's over now... Kazuki is here and we are both fine.' '

"I'm very relieved for that... I don't know how much longer I could take."

' ' Glad he came two weeks early...' ' she smiled.

"Yes."

' ' I am done... Now the hotspring... I can't wait when I am in there.' ' He helped her there as well, again checking for his son. She went in the water and sighs deep, that felt good. ' ' I am fine now. You can go back to Kazuki.' ' she smiled.

He nodded and returned. Kiyomi sighs deep again and closed her eyes. This felt good after a night of hardworking. Kazuki was sleeping, so peaceful. Not knowing he yet, he was being loved so much by his father and mother. Saito silently watched his son, with interest. He wondered what he would be like in the future, what sort of job he'd like. If he'd be a warrior. Kiyomi made a soft sigh and stretched herself out. She hoped Kazuki would be tall like his father... maybe even like him with a bit wild side if her.

He picked him up carefully, just because he wanted to hold him in his arms. Kazuki opened his eyes. His bright purple eyes kept an eye on his father. The muscles weren't that far yet to have good control over his arms or legs but the faint short smile he made to his father...was real.

"Look at that... you seem quite happy..." Kazuki blinked with his eyes. Kiyomi stared at them, what a sweet scene... father and son. She smiled. He smiled faintly at that little face.

Kazuki moved a bit with his head. "' It's long time ago... I saw you like that... Hajime.'" smiled Kiyomi.

"How do you mean?"

"' At ease... and peaceful. I worried you a lot...'"

"I worried about you."

"' I know...that's why I did my best... not to worry you... even if it failed.'" she laughed softly. "' But I rested a lot... and was eating healthy thanks to Mother, Father, you and even Uncle Sanosuke.'" "

"I kept expecting for things to turn out for the worst."

She went out of bath and put a towel around her. It was getting warm anyway and walked slowly but careful to them and sat down next to him. "' You only experienced the worst things...'"

"How could I expect any different... I... don't want to expect good things and be let down when the worst happens."

"' Now you expect worse... but.. it became a wonderful thing... How felt that?'"

"I'm very relieved that for once things turned out fine."

She touched his cheek. "' Then from now... I will work on it... you will have more fine things to experience... and you will never expect them.'" she smiled faintly.

"I still need to watch him closely for a while."

"' I know. We won't leave him.'" "

He sighed quietly. "I wonder... if I'll do well."

"' He smiled already to you...'"

"Yes..."



' And I have faith in you... You will be a wonderful father to him.' said Kiyomi and look at Kazuki, laying peaceful in Saito's arms. ' Yes, you will have the best papa in Japan.' she smiled. Kazuki's tiny hand went up and grabbed Saito's haori. ' See? He already agrees...' she smiled faintly.

"Ah..." he smiled faintly.

Kiyomi bent forward and placed lightly a kiss on Kazuki's head and then kissed Hajime. ' I love the both of you...'

"I'll make sure he has all the things he needs."

' No doubt you will.' she said and changed in fresh clothing. ' The bath has sooth indeed my pain.'

"I'm glad to hear that."

' Shall we stay here or outside?'

"It is up to you."

' Let's sit in the main room...'

"Very well."

She smiled. And so they went together to the main hall. Osen was there with Katsumi, Kosuzu with Isamu and Souji.

"There's the worrying guy." Souji commented.

' Hey... let him be. I mean... they are first time parents.' smiled Osen.

When Hajime sat down, Kiyomi put the big blanket around him and sat against his chest and put the blanket around them and held together Kazuki.

Osen and Kosuzu giggled together. ' Young mother is making a nest... so sweet.' commented Kosuzu.

Saito wasn't sure how to feel with a bunch of mother hens gawking at them. Chizuru came in with fresh made tea and heard them. ' ooh Shush you two. Just let them be.' she said. ' Hajime, Kiyomi, do you also want tea?'

"That would be fine." Saito answered, though still faintly cautious. He hoped that Shinpachi or Heisuke didn't battle around today.

Chizuru filled the cups with tea. and brought it to them and put it on the ground. ' Kazuki.. can I hold him?' asked Chizuru and Kiyomi nodded. Chizuru took Kazuki and smiled at him. ' You really are a sweetie.' said Chizuru.

Shinpachi seemed to feel the sudden glare that turned towards him and stiffened, pausing with a mouthfull of rice. "Wha?"

Heisuke and Mamoru came in, back from their patrol. Heisuke sighs

deeply while Mamoru was smirking. '' Why the face, Heisuke?'' asked Sanosuke.

'' He confessed to a girl but got turned down.'' smirked Mamoru.

Shinpachi grumbled something, what was with that guy? It was like he thought he was some terrible influence.

'' Hey...Itoshii... they won't fight. Don't glare at them..'' whispers Kiyomi softly. He sighed and gave in to the request.

Hijikata came in with a big smile. '' You look happy, dad.'' said Mamoru. '' Of course. I became a grandfather and... I bought the house of the neighbours. We will break the wall down and connect that house with this one so we got more rooms.''

"Oh, great." Shinpachi sounded interested in hearing that

'' Yea, isn't? I mean... We have three kids but no doubt that Souji or Hajime will get a second one. And you have a girlfriend too, Shinpachi. And what if Mamoru gets a girl? I need to think of you guys and the next generation.'' said Hijikata.

"About that..." Shinpachi began.

'' hhhmmm?'' wondered Hijikata.

"Well... you see... my dango girl and I... have eloped. Since there's already a little guy on the way."

''...'' Heisuke and mamoru became quiet.

'' So... another fresh parents coming up... it gets busy here.'' smiled Sanosuke.

'' Where is your girl now, Shinpachi?'' asked Hijikata.

"Staying with her father. He's a doctor so she's in good hands. I just didn't want to bring things up until we were for sure."

'' I see. When you think the time is right... she is welcome here as well with the little one. Families shouldn't live separated.'' said Hijikata.

'' More nephews or nieces. I am a blessed uncle.'' said Sanosuke with a content smile.

"Whenever the extra rooms are ready I'll bring her."

'' I need to work quick then.'' smiled Hijikata and went to Chizuru.

'' There is our little warrior. Did he slept well?'' asked Hijikata. Hijikata took Kazuki over from Chizuru and sat down. '' I need everyone's help. More help means faster done.'' said Hijikata.

Chizuru stood up and brought some dango to Kiyomi. Kiyomi took a bite

and held the dango stick for his mouth so he also could take a bite.

"So... how long with all of us working do you think it will take?" Shinpachi asked, eager.

' ' HHhmmm... if all of us work together... I think two weeks.' '

"Perfect."

' ' If I move then to a new room... the two rooms between Hijikata and Saito's room can be used then for Kazuki and maybe their next child.' ' said Heisuke thinking serious.

"How about Sano? No ladies yet?"

' ' Not me... Shinpachi. Don't get me wrong... Having a girl and a family is nice but... I got you guys...and alot kids around me already. I am fine with it.' ' said Sanosuke.

"Huh... that's kinda depressing."

' ' Maybe but... I love my nephews and nieces like they are my own kids. I'm at peace with that.' '

Shinpachi rubbed his head and shrugged.

' ' So I made a plan ho-...' ' suddenly Hijikata became quiet and lifted Kazuki a bit up and saw a wet spot on his Hakama and then he looked at Kazuki. ' ' You little rascal...' ' he chuckled. Shinpachi snorted with laughed and Saito looked a bit surprised. Hijikata look at Kazuki's cloth. ' ' Who changed him?' ' asked Hijikata. ' ' I did.' ' said Kiyomi. ' ' Come, I will show you how it is done.' ' said Hijikata.

Souji was the one that seemed most amused by this. "Hm, he knows the right guy to pee on."

' ' He is testing the demon's patience.' ' said Heisuke.

Hijikata glared at Heisuke and went back to focus on Kazuki. ' ' Put this here and then fold it like this and you pull this to that point, make a knot and it is done.' ' said Hijikata.

' ' I see, that is much better indeed.' ' said Kiyomi.

"Just like those haiku..."

' ' Souji!' ' said Hijikata a bit embarressed.

"I think they're excellent." Saito added.

"You've got terrible taste." Souji taunted Saito in regards

' ' Thank you... Hajime.' ' said Hijikata gentle to him and gave him Kazuki. ' ' I am proud of you, you gave me a wonderful grandson together with Kiyomi.' '

"Ah, how sappy." Souji complained.

Kosuzu pulled Souji's face to hers and kissed him. '' Now we are sappy too...''

'' Ewl...'' said Isamu...

"Ah, come on Souji, not in front of everyone." Shinpachi complained.

'' You scaring you own kid...'' said Heisuke.

Kiyomi lay against Hajime again. '' Aren't you tired yet?'' she asked softly to him.

"No. Not yet."

Kazuki started to whimper softly again. '' Hajime... can you pull up the blanket a bit so I can feed him?'' she whispers. He pulled the blanket up and turned them to face the wall so that his back and the blanket were interrupting everyone's view. Kiyomi opened her kimono and gave Kazuki his feeding. Kiyomi stared at Hajime before she lay her head on his shoulder. '' I am more then happy, I can't describe this feeling.'' she whispers.

"I know how you feel." He would have liked to have kissed her, but not in front of everyone like this.

Mamoru stood up and walked to a corner and picked up a small screen and put it behind them. '' This way, Kiyomi will have a bit more freedom. Aunt Osen is using this screen as well.'' he said.

'' Thank you, Mamoru.'' said Kiyomi and Mamoru walked away.

Kiyomi was looking at Kazuki who was eating with eager. Kiyomi look at Hajime and smiled. She was so happy.

"He's strong."

'' Yes, like his father...''

"Like you."

She smiled at Hajime. '' I love you.''

"I love you too. Both of you."

She kissed gentle his cheek. He was more than happy, he couldn't believe this was possible. Kazuki's hand was resting on Kiyomi and she smiled, feeling the little one looking for the warmth of his mother. She felt Hajime's hand, holding hers, supporting Kazuki. He was the best husband and father they could wish for.

"Tch." Souji scoffed. "He gets all the fun."

'' Didn't we have fun this morning...?'' asked Kosuzu quietly.

"Well... true."

'' We were like that as well when Isamu was born. And knowing

Hajime.. he wasn't really close with Kiyomi because he was afraid to hurt her...''

"Oh, I know." Souji commented.

Kiyomi released Hajime's lips and smiled faintly. '' I missed being close with you.''

"I was close... just..."

''... Being careful... I know...' ' said Kiyomi and she felt Kazuki was done and rubbed his back softly. Kazuki let a burp but..a loud one. Kiyomi laughed quietly. '' That was a big one. I want to go back to our room so Kazuki can sleep quietly...' '

"Very well."

She closed her kimono and stood up. He set the blanket over her shoulders. She smiled and walked with Kazuki towards the door. '' I am going to rest with kazuki.' ' she said to them.

'' Alright, rest well.' ' said Hijikata.

"There goes her shadow." Souji commented. Kiyomi gave him a deathglare before she left the room. "Ohh, scary."

Kiyomi enter their room and placed Kazuki in his small bed and kissed his head. '' Sleep well, Kazuki.' ' she said softly. Saito closed the door behind them, he didn't feel safe with it open. He liked keeping them safe like this. '' Hajime, look how cute he is in his little bed.' '

"Yes..."

Kiyomi lay on her back on her futon and touched her stomach. '' It still... feels weird you know... now it is empty.' '

"Mmm..." he was actually glad since it meant he didn't have to worry.

'' If there comes a time... that I am maybe pregnant again... will you be alot worried again?' ' she asked.

"... I... maybe not as much, but I'll still worry."

'' I see. That relieve me in a way. I don't want to stress you again... you barely slept.' ' She hugged him. '' You need to sleep. I am fine, kazuki is fine... You are tired...you are daydreaming more then normally.' '

"How can I sleep at a time like this? I don't want to miss anything."

'' Kazuki is sleeping now as well...' ' she smiled faintly.

"I suppose..."

'' Take a nap, I will stay awake...' ' she said and kissed his cheek.  
'' You need more sleep.' '

"I can't... if you don't get to sleep..."

' ' Shall we then sleep together?'

"Yes, that would be preferable." She smiled and lay down with her arms open. "Do you think he wants to sleep with us as well?"

' ' Yea... no doubt...' she said and sat up and picked up Kazuki and lay him between them. Kiyomi lay down as well.

He glanced at them and sighed in contentment. "Now I can keep you both safe while I rest."

She smiled. ' ' You are such a good guy.'

"Me...?" He blinked in surprise.

She went forward with her face so she wouldn't squeseed Kazuki and pressed her lips on his. ' ' Yes. ' '

"I'm confused..."

' ' No need to...' she said. ' ' We will have a wonderful life...' ' '

He nodded slowly. "Yes..."

Autumn ended and Winter came. It was a cold winter but they managed very well. Hijikata and the others had rebuild the house of the neighbours and added it to their own house, making one complete house.

Shinpachi came with his fiancée and their baby boy at that time and now it was early spring.

Kazuki had grown very well and was now seven month's old. Osen had started her tea when Katsumi was 6 months and Kiyomi had did the same when Kazuki was six months.

Kiyomi, Osen and Kosuzu were in the garden with Miyabi, the fiancée of Shinpachi and their son Ryo. Kiyomi was trying to give kazuki his first made meal... a dish of squashed rice, very soft cooked vegetables and squased tofu. Saito glanced at their son briefly, he had grown well and for the most part Saito had really calmed down and become a parent that didn't fret over everything as he had previously been.

Kiyomi put a spoon his mouth and Kazuki was tasting it and then asking for more. ' ' Like his Papa, he loves tofu.' ' smiled Kiyomi faintly.

"Is that so?"

Kiyomi smiled at him and gave Kazuki another spoon. Katsumi was eating as well. ' ' Aunt Osen, when will they talk?' ' asked Kiyomi.

' ' Around six or seven month's they start to babble unknown things but if you learn them simple things... Katsumi can saw Mo and Dada already... And she call her brother Chi...' ' said Osen.

Saito continued with his reports that he had to fill out, still keeping an eye on them though.

' ' Demon babies are very different from human babies. They take longer.' ' smiled Miyabi with her small baby boy of three months old.

Saito sighed and snapped the folder closed, rubbing his eyes. Aizu really was overloading him in this report matter lately. Kiyomi was in the beginning mad that Aizu came again to Hajime for their stuff. She thought he was now free from the depts since he had fought the war. He continued writing down other reports for the Shinsengumi instead, since that would go quicker.

' ' But really, Miyabi-chan, having fun already with Shinpachi. I mean, I love my husband alot like you do but... after two months already...' ' said Osen.

' ' I can't help it, Shin-kun is so sweet.' ' giggled Miyabi.

Kiyomi didn't answer. She was very careful, even she was drinking the tea. She didn't want to worry Saito...

"Ah, there... look at that Hajime-kun I think it's a grey streak already." Souji mused, behind Saito, though he was all too busy in his reports to answer.

Kiyomi launched a food of Kazuki right in Souji's face. ' ' Stop picking on him.' '

' ' Kiyomi that was not needed.' ' said Kosuzu.

"Oh, I was a bit hungry just then, perfect." Souji replied.

Kiyomi gave him a deathglare before she kept feeding Kazuki then. ' ' Why is he always teasing your Papa...' ' she wondered softly.

Kazuki look at Hajime before he said: ' ' Pa...' '

He smiled to himself upon hearing it. Kiyomi stared at Kazuki. ' ' Say it again...Kazuki... Pa..pa...' '

Kazuki stared at his mother before again to his father... ' ' Pa..pa...' ' He glanced at his son and set aside his papers, that could wait for just a moment. Kazuki held his small hand up to his father. ' ' Papa...' '

"You've learned quickly."

' ' Papa...' ' said Kazuki again. Kiyomi smiled faintly. Saito glanced around, things really had changed around here... the next generation of warriors would be taking over.

Chizuru came with tea and some snacks and put it down for everyone. ' ' Kiyomi... Can... Hijikata and I... once sleeping with Kazuki?' '

Saito had no complaints he knew they would be fine.

' ' Sure. I bet Kazuki will love it to play with father.' ' said Kiyomi with a smile. Saito sighed and rubbed the back of his neck, it was sore from staring down at those papers for so long... ' ' We had our dinner already... and Kazuki just finished his. And then he needs a bath and then I tell a story before he is going to sleep and when-...' ' said Kiyomi and Chizuru hugged her daughter.

' ' It will be fine... No doubt Toshizo will doting him.' '

"Hm... I trust the vice commander to take care of him."

' ' Hajime... When you will learn it is Toshizo...' ' smiled Chizuru.  
' ' We are your parents.' '

"Ah... sorry. Forgive me. I still forget sometimes."

Kiyomi kissed Kazuki and hugged him. ' ' Sleep well. I love you. Let's say bye bye to Papa.' ' Kiyomi gave Kazuki to Hajime. He gave his son a small hug as well, before handing him over to Chizuru.

Kazuki closed his small fists in Chizuru's kimono. ' ' Thank you. Say bye bye to everyone.' ' said Chizuru and walked away. It would be the first night without Kazuki...

Saito huffed and glanced at the cursed reports he had left still...

' ' Give me the simple ones.' ' said Kiyomi.

"Hm?"

' ' The simple reports... I was captain too...' ' she smiled.

"... I... you shouldn't have to work."

' ' The simple ones... means the easy ones. If I can finish some it will light your work up as well.

"You won't be able to fill out the ones for Aizu..." He tried to think what he could give her that would be easy.

' ' Our own reports...' ' she said and sat next to him.

"Yes..." He sighed faintly. "Ah, I may have to make a trip to Aizu."

' ' Really?' ' she asked and showed a bit sadness and sighs. ' ' I though... you never needed to work again for them...' '

"It will be brief. I'll be back by tonight."

' ' Really? Please turn them down if they have something. You have a family now.' ' said Kiyomi. If she heard Aizu... she was afraid they would take him again away from her.

"The war is over. I assure you there's no problem."

She nodded. ' ' I will work then on these.' ' she said softly and snuggled against him, she trembled a bit..



He glanced at her. "Don't worry..."

She nodded. '' Be back soon..' ' she said softly and plant a soft gentle kiss on his cheek.

"I will."

She picked up his files and went to their room so she could work on it. He gathered his cloak and headed out, the sooner he got back the better. She was working on his files. It was a long time ago but she actually enjoyed it a bit.

Sometime later during the night he returned, having finished up the late meeting with Aizu. Kiyomi was still awake. She had finished the reports and was sewing now a kimono for Kazuki. He was growing so he needed a new one soon. He put his horse up and headed inside, sighing deeply. It was a long, tiring trip. Kiyomi put the kimono aside and went to the bowl with water and put her kimono off and her bandage of her chest so she could freshen up before she went to bed.

He opened the door and stepped into their room, dropping his papers aside on the desk.

'' Welcome back, Hajime.'' she said softly as she dried her neck off.

"I'm sorry you had to work so hard when you already work so hard to take care of our son." He did feel bad she had to take on some of his paperwork. He knew just how difficult it was to watch over a child. It was definitely a two person job.

She put her sleeping kimono on and walked to him. '' Kazuki is with my parents and it felt nice to work a bit on something else.'' she smiled faintly. '' Especially because I helped you.''

"I hope it wasn't too troublesome."

'' No... it wasn't.'' she said. '' I will get a towel and a washing cloth so you can fresh your self up.''

"You've worked hard enough today. Please rest."

'' I love you.'' She smiled and put her hands on his face and gave him a long kiss.

He slid his arms around her waist and pulled her closer to him, kissing her back intently. She smiled faintly in their kiss. His strong arms holding her, always made her save.

"I love you... so much. You do so much for me... more than I deserve."

'' But you deserve alot.'' she said softly. '' You protect me and Kazuki everyday... You work for our future, his future...''

"Hmm, I feel I should do more."

'' You always had that feeling but you really do...' ' she said and kissed his cheek.

"Is there anything more I can do for you?" He questioned, since she worked so much, he just wanted to make sure she had her relaxation time as well.

' ' Fresh yourself up so we can cuddle. Since we have Kazuki... we barely cuddle... ' ' she smiled.

"Alright."

She pecked his lips and went to their futon and she sat down, brushing her hair. He briefly left the room to clean himself up, mainly the dust from riding all the way to Aizu's main home. Kiyomi put the light softly down so it was not that bright in the room, making it a bit romantic. Once he was clean enough he returned to the room.

She smiled when she saw him. ' ' That feel much better I think, isn't? ' '

"Yes."

' ' I kept your spot warm.. ' '

He stepped forward and slowly sat down, he was tired, no doubt and it was nice to be comfortably in bed. She lay her head on his shoulder and held his hand. He glanced at her for a moment. She glance at him and smiled faintly.

"You seem happy."

' ' Yes. I am married to you... and we have together a wonderful son... ' ' He offered a faint smile in return. She touched his cheek and hugged him. ' ' You are everything to me and Kazuki. ' '

"I feel the same way about the both of you."

She stroke her finger over his cheek to his lips and touched them lightly. He held her hand and pressed a kiss to it.

' ' Your hand kisses... I missed them... ' '

"Hmm... I wasn't really gone so long."

' ' You didn't gave them for a long time... You have work, I have Kazuki... It is the first time in months we are alone now, the two of us. ' '

"Ah... it is..." He tried to think how long it had been.

It was more then a year... they were this close again since Hajime was protecting her. She smiled fainly at the warrior with dark purple hair and bright blue eyes. He held her close to him. She snuggled her face in his neck and placed a small kiss on his skin.

"Do you want another one?" Somehow... he had that feeling, but this time he really wasn't too worried.

She stared at him and flushed softly. She nodded yes. ' ' I have started on my tea... but the last days... I didn'take it since I was so busy... ' '

"Do you want to wait? Either way it's fine."

' ' Carry another child... that is made my us... and having a brother or sister for Kazuki would be wonderful.'

"You're content with that sort of thing even though it makes me nervous."

' ' I survived the first time...' she chuckled softly.

"I know."

' ' And we know know what we can expect...'

"If it's the same."

' ' Ofcourse.' she smiled. ' ' I make sure it will be the same.' He sighed quietly and rubbed his eyes, trying to hide how tired he was. ' ' We can sleep first... so you saved up some energy... or do you want to fall asleep after it?'

"..." He froze, a bit surprised she wanted to right now.

' ' If you don't want to... I can understand... ' she smiled contently.

"No, I'll..."

She look at him and placed her hand against his face. ' ' Are you sure?' she asked.

"I'm sure..."

' ' Really? I don't want to see you all tensed up all the time.' she said softly and snuggled against him.

"Am I tensed up?"

' ' When I was pregnant with kazuki...' she giggled. ' ' You were protecting me so much...'

"That was a bit diffirent than our current situation."

' ' True...' She heard his heart beating... She still loved it so much. ' ' But I really do... want to have another baby with you... Hajime.'

"Is right now safe?"

' ' What do you mean safe? Kazuki started on human food. ' she smiled. ' ' And he sleeps through the night, he sleeps after noon... And I am still healthy...'

He nodded in understanding.

' ' It felt wonderful... to be pregnant and wondering how it would look like...' she smiled.

"Hmmm..."

' ' Do you... really want to try?' ' she asked softly.

"If you want."

' ' Only.. if you are 100%. If you do it for me... It won't feel right for the both of us...' ' she smiled gentle.

"Yes. I'm fine with it. Just as long as you're careful."

' ' I will. I will be careful like I was with kazuki.'

"I trust you will."

She smiled. ' ' I love you.' ' she whispers and kissed him. He held her closer to him, yes, he wouldn't mind another one. Another one with the man she love. She smiled in their kiss. He laid back with her and just continued to hold her, nothing more. For just a little while a bit of rest would be fine... He laid back with her and just continued to hold her, nothing more. For just a little while a bit of rest would be fine...

She snuggled closely against him. ' ' How sweet how he calls you papa...' '

"It is natural."

' ' I know.. but his cute voice...' '

"Hmm."

' ' I am so happy with you.'

He smiled and leaned against her. She held him and snuggled closer to him. It seemed for now a little rest would be fine, so he merely held her close and closed his eyes. It had been a long day. Kiyomi stroke softly through his hair and was humming softly, the same song she sang for Kazuki. For the most part he was content, if only it could stay like these peaceful sigh softly of being content in his arms.

"It's nice to have times like these."

' ' Yea... It was a long time ago we were like this...' '

He sighed quietly and closed his eyes to rest. She closed her eyes as well and snuggled closer to him. He smiled faintly. She inhaled deep his scent, and smiled.

"I thought that I wouldn't know what to do after the war had ended, but... it seems things aren't as bad as I expected. Even if I hardly use my blade anymore... it's peaceful."

' ' I know right... It's a nice.. time like this... focussing on something else then only blood and death.' ' He still had nightmares every now and then, but not so much as he had previously had. ' ' And you sleep better as well... You had nights you barely slept.'

"I recall."

' ' Do you also recall our first...kiss?'

"Yes... I... was a bit brash."

She chuckled softly. ' ' I was amazed first but after two seconds my heart was almost bursting out my chest.'

"Mmm... there were various reasons... normally I wouldn't... have been that way... just... under the circumstances..."

' ' What kind of... circumstances.. hhhmmm?'

"Well..."

' ' I know you react on my blood...' ' she smiled softly.

"That and also... having someone there for me... when I needed it most... and maybe a little to prove that I definitely don't like men... but I think by now that's a given."

She giggled softly. ' ' Yea those rumors... you liking men... But that I am for you...and you for me... that makes me very happy... Hajime.'

"... those are still around somehow." He pondered it, but it wasn't something that bothered him, he just didn't get how he could have a wife and a child and they still thought he liked men.

' ' Well, I do know better...' ' she smiled and stroke his cheek.

"I think I quite well proved it to you..."

' ' Ohyes... you did for sure...' '

"Hmm..." Hopefully those rumors didn't affect his sons.

' ' I think they are jealous... since you got the Demon Vice-Commanders daughter.'

"They started before that."

' ' Really? So they think now more you went with me... because you wanted my father instead...?'

"Mmm... the basic idea I suppose..."

' ' Maybe they need to see once how much we love each other... and having a family together...' ' she smiled. ' ' But you do love my father in a way... as a parent.'

"Yes."

' ' And about mother?'

"Hm?"

' ' Do you love mother as well?'

"Not at first...but gradually as a parent."

' ' Now you are making me curious. Want to tell me?' ' she asked with a faint smile.

"... to be honest... I sort of hated her... a bit..."

' ' Why was that? Uncle Sanosuke told me once that my father and mother broke up once but that after a day they were together again.' '

"That... was also my fault."

' ' Where you jealous on her...?' ' she asked with a playful smile

"Since after the Vi-Hijikata only was interested in her and nothing else..."

' ' But he did broke up with her then since... he didn't wanted to lose you as well... since my father loves everyone of the family.' ' said Kiyomi softly. Her father loved everyone, he saw them as his brothers, Saito as his son... Her ather, taking care of everyone.

"Yes, but I pleaded for him not to do such a thing."

' ' Hajime... well, be glad... you did... otherwise I wasn't here with you...' ' she smiled.

"I know."

' ' But it must been hard for you when they told they became parents?' '

"Yes."

' ' And when we were born?' '

"HMMMMMM..." how could he put it. "The only thing I could do was promise to protect you."

She smiled and hugged him. ' ' I have... my old... booklet...when I was fifteen... I wrote things in it... about you... how I thought about you...' ' He furrowed his brow in surprise. ' '... Want to...read it?' '

"Only if you want to show me."

She nodded and rolled on her otherside and opened the drawe near her and took out an old booklet and opened a random page and gave it to him.

\_ ' ' I was strolling around... when I ended up by the cherry blossoms... and saw him. I never knew... how beautiful a scenary could be...\_

\_Hajime was gazing at the small flowers... while his hair was waving softly in the breeze. And his blue eyes... I wish I could see them closer then normally...\_

\_I know, it's one sided love... He will never see me... After all, I

am the Vice-Commander's daughter.\_

But... if it were possible... to know his arms around me... or how he would kiss me... It is not bad to dream about that... right?

\_I would rather stay alone, if I never can be with him... I can't forget Hajime, even if he is older then me... I see a man that is trustworthy and loyal.''\_

No doubt, he looked surprised upon seeing the words, it was nice to be called that in someone's private thoughts. It was easy to say out loud, but to know it was actually thought a long time ago.

' ' Want to see another page?' ' she asked softly.

"Yes."

She flipped another page randomly and showed it him. The page showed that it was wet once before.

\_' Uncle Souji was training Mamoru and... Hajime was observing them.  
It's so unfair that Mamoru gets to have all the fun.\_

\_I wish I could train with Hajime.. having an excuse to be close with him... or to touch him. It's really a curse to love him while he will never answer it. I... am crying now... I feel so lonely...\_

\_I can only gaze at him... and call him Uncle Saito... Today he spoke to me... I was so happy when he called my name... asking if my training went well... He noticed me. But...deep inside... I love him so much...\_

\_If there was a way I could be with him, if it cost me years of working hard... if it is possible... I would do everything...'\_

He briefly read over it and grasped her chin, pressing his lips along hers. He wished he had known. Her eyes went wide a bit before she closed them and kissed him back.

"I wish I had known sooner."

' I was scared.. if I told you... you would have ignored me...' she whispers softly.

"No. Though I wouldn't be able to touch you at that time I'd have taken care of you."

' Hajime..' she said and her voice broke, if she knew that... some tears fell over her cheeks... ' If I knew that...that time...' He pulled her closer to him. ' I love you...Hajime... I love you.'

"I love you too."

She bruised softly her lips over his before she kissed him lightly. She set the book aside and turned her under him, pulling the blankets over them. She put her her arms around his neck, never releasing his lips from hers. He hoped nobody would interrupt this time. She deepened their kiss and opened his kimono and put her hands on his back, feeling his skin under her touch. As always he remained as gentle as possible with her, there was no rush.

She kissed his cheek and jaw line. '' Really... there are no words for this...''

"No." It was true, there weren't. Their love...was unconditionally and eternal. She couldn't live without him and he couldn't live without her. He brushed a hand along her cheek gently, he wished that he had been able to well watch over her during that time had he known. She leaned in his touched and closed her eyes, enjoying it. "I... hope that I can have a good family with you..."

'' We already have...''

"Well... a larger one."

'' No doubt.''

"Hmmm..." He pondered for a little while, wondering what that would be like.

'' We will be more busy but I don't mind. And everyone help us...''

"Yes..."

She touched his cheek. '' So long we are together... everything will be fine.''

"I believe it."

'' Me too..' ' she smiled.

He hugged her even closer. She kissed his chin very gentle. "It's complicated... our situations."

'' Complicated?''

"Hmmm... that I want a family, but I'm afraid to have one... still... even though I'm not afraid as the first time... I still don't want anything to happen to you."

'' I will be careful like the first time... Kazuki is very healthy and I am as well.''

"I know... I just don't want to lose either of you."

'' You won't. Because I want to see how Kazuki is going be a warrior like you or a sword craftman... and his brother or sister... I want to see how you play with them.. and that the four of us go to festivals...''

"Hmmm... that would be nice..."

'' Another boy or girl... would be wonderful... and Kazuki would be big brother...' ' she smiled. He nodded in agreement. '' And you will be with me as well... I got no worries.''

He rested his head against her shoulder, really he needed to deal with that fear better. Nothing had happened the first time, surely now would be fine as well.



' ' It will be fine...really...'

"Then do you want to try now?" She nodded yes. "Alright... let's try then..."

She smiled and kissed him softly. Meanwhile Souji was musing on his own, things were indeed peaceful now around here. Kosuzu was sleeping like Isamu with his piece of cloth he liked since he was a baby. This was what he liked, Souji loved having so many kids around. It made it seem like those days when it was just Kondo's kendo school. Mamoru was hugging his blanket and mumbled something about a dog. Sometimes, Souji wished it would go back to those days.

Hijikata was doing his nightly patrol to make sure everyone was safe like he always did and stared at the moon.

"Still awake?" Souji questioned, leaning against the wall.

' ' My nightly patrol to make sure everyone is fine.' ' said Hijikata.

"... sounds like some people are more than fine."

' ' What do you mean?' ' asked Hijikata. He didn't patrol yet at that side.

"Oh... you know..." Souji gave a suggestive brow wiggle.

' ' Shinpachi and Miyabi?'

"Nope."

' ' Then who is? I mea-...' ' And then he heard the soft moan. ' ' Aah I get it. Kazuki is sleeping by us... so they took their chance to give attention to each other.'

"Seems so."

' ' Hajime is good for her... and she loves him alot.'

"I think by now most everyone knows it."

' ' Yes. Sometimes... I still can't believe it... but those two... they fit each other perfect...'

"Hm, they do don't they? I don't think he could love anyone else other than the daughter of the Vice Commander. He still worships the ground you walk on."

' ' I don't mind it, I love him as my own son.' ' said Hijikata.

\* \* \*

><p>' 'Why does my chest hurt so much when I sense your warmth?' '  
whisper Kiyomi to Hajime.<p>

"I really can't be sure... I'm not sure anyone can be sure... it's just how it is... when you love someone."

' ' Hajime...' she said with a small voice and a tear rolled down... So much she loved him... So much she want to be with him... She was always longing for him, every second... to hear his voice, to smell his scent, to see his face...eager to touch him and to feel him. He loved her, but he knew he didn't even have to say it anymore, she knew it, this proved it. She pulled him gently against her and kissed him passionate. He smiled into it. She smiled as well and removed his kimono to feel his warmth... The warmth that told her that he loves her so much as she loves him. He considered various things, but even though he was worried he was still glad.

She stroke a strand of his hair back behind his ear. ' ' I can keep gazing at you...' '

"Hmm." He pulled her more firmly against himself.

' '...nnn...' she moaned softly. ' ' Please... remove my kimono...' ' she whispers...

Though he more than likely reached down and pulled it apart too roughly, due to the slight tear he heard, but... since she had teased him too much with the way she sounded right now he didn't want to wait any longer, because this probably wouldn't last too long. She leans against him to feel him and sighs deep of being content. "It might be best that you take over... otherwise... I'm afraid I might ravage you uncon trollably."

' ' Well, remember... once you wanted to hear me... to scream your name... but I don't mind it...to have fun with you...' ' she smiled gentle.

"Well... at that time... I had been away for a long time...so I couldn't really help but want to... it's the same as now..."

' ' Then please do so... love me with everything you got... forever...' ' she said passionate and kiss his hand.

"I... you want me to...? what if I hurt you?"

' ' You won't hurt me... and no doubt... you will earn some scratches from me... and... love bites...' '

He reached under her and pulled her hips up into his, then he wouldn't hold back at all...

' '... ahh...' ' she moaned and put her arms around him.

His grip on her tightened, it had been a long time. "I'm just warning you... if I do it like this... it won't last long."

' ' We got...still... morning...' ' she panted... and kissed him. ' ' But right now... I... I need you... more than...anything...' '

He only briefly nodded in acceptance of the answer and picked up his pace, not holding back anything at all. If it was really what she asked for. There was a time she didn't supressed herself...and that was when Hajime returned... now again... she didn't supressed herself either... Right now, scar didn't cared foy anyone except Hajime...

' ' Ooh Ha...jime... Don't... let... me go...' she begged...

"Never." He assured through a voice that sounded too rough to be his own.

Kiyomi...was panting wildly now and gave him more acces. ' 'HHnnngg... Hajime...' she growled and scratched his arms.

Saito, true to his word didn't hold back one single bit, but also he really didn't think this could last long despite wanting it to. "You have no idea how good you feel."

' ' You...you are so firm... Ooh Hajime... I am so close...' she moaned loud...

"I love you too much... I still can't get close enough to you for it to be enough."

She moved her hips with his movements... ' ' How close... is this?' ' He merely smiled at her. She smiled as well and pecked his lips... He shifted as close to her as he could possibly get, but was painfully aware this was as close as possible. ' ' Ha...me... hmmm...' she whimpers... A few movements more...and she was done...

He brushed a hand along her cheek briefly, he could always tell. He could always feel it. Now was no diffirent. She started to arch her back already a bit... and her pants became heavier. He leaned over and bit into her shoulder, the inner beast that was always beneath the surface, which had started this entire thing pushed him to do so.

' ' Ooohhh...' A pleasure moan... She started to tighten lightly around him. Yes, indeed, she was trying to kill him, he was sure of it. She was pushed over the edge and was tighten now hard around him and she arched her back. She scratched his neck and shoulders and arched her back full. ' ' HAJIME!' she screamed.

He gritted his teeth hard, inhaled deeply and clenched a fist. She was panting... that... no..there were no words for this...at all...

"You think... that's enough to start one?"

She look at him and smiled. ' ' I don't know... maybe they swim the wrong way...' she joked.

"Is that what you think? Hmmm..."

' ' Yea...' she giggled softly.

"Really? We'll have to try again then."

' ' 'Always...' she smiled

\* \* \*

><p>"hm, I should stop by and see how they're doing." Souji said.<p>

' ' Hajime will murder you... or Kiyomi... ' '

"Worth it."

Hijikata shook his head and yet he is smiling. ' ' Do I want know? ' '

"Probably not."

' ' If I say don't do it... you will do it... ' ' smirked Hijikata.

"Exactly."

' ' I still stay here before I will be hit by something... like a kunai. ' ' smirked Hijikata.

"See you later then."

' ' Good night... Souji. ' ' said Hijikata and went back to Chizuru and Kazuki.

Souji headed down the hall and waited, he may as well wait. Kiyomi was in a status between being awake and sleeping... aware of the sounds but tired to respond... Souji paused by the door and lightly knocked, but that was only so he could have the excuse. Kiyomi was now sleeping, still under the blanket with Hajime, all being cozy.

"Hmmm..." seemed they were asleep. "Hajime-kun... still asleep?" It seemed so... that was when he spotted it! Eyes zooming in with an eye like an eagle he noticed the book and picked it up, swiftly stealing away with it. Kiyomi moved a bit slept further... "A novel of sexy position-oh... no... it's not... well what do we have here?" Souji mused as he stepped out. This would give him ammo.

\_ ' ' ... It was hot today... too hot. I wanted to cool myself down and went to the bathing place... when I saw him... standing half naked. He was wearing his hakama but... his chest... He was throwing water over his head... the drops sliding down... discovering each inch of his skin. I wish ... I could be like a water drop... slowly sliding over him... down... \_

\_ And his hair... was sticking at his face, his gaze through it. It was already hot that day... but... it became hotter when I saw him like that. ' ' \_

"Oh this is great..." Souji commented.

And there was more. ' ' I fell today. My sandal snapped while I was cleaning the frontyard. When I look at my knee, I had scrape it. Not that I really cared since it would heal anyway. But... Hajime came and... he was worried. He cleaned it and wrapped his handkerchief around it.

And then he lifted me up... It was... so nice. Even that nice... I was getting a warm feeling in my stomach. ' ' \_

Souji smirked and tucked the book into his jacket and walked off, just wait.

It was morning and a certain couple just finished their morning exercises. Kiyomi was panting while she stroke Hajime's hair since he was resting on his chest. '' We...we need to get up... Hajime...'' she panted lightly still.

He slowly opened his eyes and glanced at her, before suddenly moving to give her space.

'' Not that fast...'' she smiled and sat up and kissed him. '' Felt wonderful... Hajime. I slept wonderful... woke up wonderful... I can't ask for more.''

"I didn't mean to fall asleep so quickly."

'' Well, we had a rough night... and morning...'' she said with a smile...

"True... you should get breakfast. You promised to take extra care."

'' I know... but someone need to keep an eye while I am freshening up and... he need to guide me as well... to the mainroom for our breakfast.''

"Of course."

She gave him a last kiss and freshened herself up. When she was putting her clothes on and Hajime freshen himself, she waited for him and both together went to the mainroom and sat down to eat their breakfast.

Hijikata was feeding Kazuki in a playful way.

"How was he?" Saito asked.

"I wanted to ask Kiyomi the same about you!" Souji threw in when he saw them.

'' He was very sweet, slept wonderful.''' said Hijikata and then loo to Souji. Ohyea, he was entertaining himself.

'' I know... I was loud...'' mumbled Kiyomi.

'' Loud? Loud?! The whole streets knows know you felt good what Aniki did to you.''' said Mamoru.

"Hmmm... maybe all of Hokkaido and even onto the mainland." Souji added.

'' Well excuse me but there are more in the household who can be loud.''' she said and she stared at Kosuzu. In the beginning of their relationship... for example.

"Which reminds me I had an interesting story to tell," Souji pulled the book, opened to a random page and cleared his throat, prepared to read...

'' Story? something we can learn from?'' asked Heisuke.

\_'' ... We were celebrating a victory. I was bringing in some new sake bottles and filled the cups how my mother learned me.\_

\_I filled Hajime's cup...and he brought it to his.. soft moist lips... and sips from it...\_

\_A drop of sake...escaped his lips... and... rolled slowly down... I bit lightly on my bottomlip... If...if I just...could kiss it...away...''\_

Saito choked in his own drink, what the...?

"Wait, there's more!"

\_'' I brought Hajime's clothes to his room since Aunt Osen and Mother cleaned it. I went to his room and placed it on his desk when I saw something under Hajime's futon sticking out.\_

\_I thought maybe he wouldn't know it was there so I picked it up...and..saw... well, what a man and woman do when they love each other...\_

\_The heat went to my cheeks and I placed it back quickly and left his room and went to my own, my heart beating. I knew Uncle Souji brought those things in his rooms to annoy Hajime...\_

\_But what I saw... on the picture... How they were entangled in each other... It's one-sided but... what would be it wonderful... if I could be connected with Hajime like that... being in his arms and sharing kisses and sweet whispers...''\_

Kiyomi was turning red beet... that was when she started to have desires as well towards Hajime since she loved him somuch.

"Souji!" Saito tackled Souji to the ground and the two struggled for the book, Souji was still defending it, trying to read out some words here and there before it was taken.

"I've memoriezed some of it! Even if you get it, Hajime-kun it's useless! Surrender now!"

'' Ooh Kiyomi...so quiet at that age but deep inside...'' teased Osen.

The room was laughing...seeing Hajime and Souji struggling about the book and the red face of Kiyomi. Saito snatched the book up finally and Souji still smirked, it was a good thing he memorized a few things here and there. Kiyomi... couldn't look up and eat..she was too embaressed. That Hajime would read her book, she didn't mind because if was about him... but...they knew... how she was thinking about him, even she was young.

Saito sighed and sat back next to her, handing the book to her since it belonged to her.

She took the book and put it in her kimono. '' I am sorry...'' she whispers softly to him.

"Why?"

She look at him. '' They know now... my deepest secret... my deepest feelings I have for you... '' she said softly and her eyes starts to water.

"Then let them be jealous that they can't have those things."

'' Hajime...'' she said softly and kissed him.

'' Come on, I just started my breakfast...'' said Mamoru.

"Eh, last night wasn't enough?" Shinpachi complained.

'' Uncle Shinpachi... there are moments that I need your help and when I stand for your room, I hear moans...and hearing aunt Miyabi asking if you want to go faster... in the middle of the day.'' said Kiyomi.

Kazuki saw his father and lifted his hand up. '' Papa...''

"HEY! That's diffirent... mostly..."

'' Different?'' said Kiyomi.

'' Well, Saito has some nice marks in his necks... you guys were rough and loud...'' said Heisuke.

Saito furrowed his brow and rubbed at a spot, surely that was a lie.

'' Papa...'' called Kazuki again.

'' Can we? He is my husband. We are married... And now you guys anyway knows about my '' dirty'' thoughts...'' she said.

'' Well, I need to say... hearing that... I think you must be young there...'' said sanosuke a bit seriously.

'' I was... fifteen.. and sixteen... when I wrote those ...'' mumbled Kiyomi.

Saito held out his hands for his son and smiled.

''fifteen and sixteen... the same age as Chizuru when she was doing naughty things with Hijikata.'' said Heisuke and both of them were blushing.

Kazuki tried to reach but he was a bit to far away so he let him fall himself on his stomach and held Hajime's finger. '' Papa...''

He picked him up and held him close to him. Kazuki sighs and lay contently against his father.

Kiyomi was eating with still flushed cheeks. She didn't touched the special tea at all. He glanced at her briefly and smiled. She glanced at him back and smiled as well, a silent '' I love you.'' moment...

Souji of course took notice. Kiyomi was eating her vegetables since it was important to have those. Kazuki found a button on Hajime's shirt and was investigating it with his small fingers. Saito once

again smiled, he couldn't wait to have another. Kiyomi leans her head against Hajime and smiled as well... It was a lovely family moment. Hijikata smiled at Chizuru, seeing this... It was a peaceful moment. Even Shinpachi laughed quietly. Kosuzu noticed as well... she was not touching it... And after such night... Kosuzu look at Souji, he had the honor. Souji merely smiled in regards to the situation.

But it was Osen who opened her mouth. '' Are you... planning for another one?'' she asked.

Saito nodded. "Yes."

The room became silent for a moment. '' But...Kazuki is seven months old...'' said Mamoru.

'' We are both so filled with happiness, Hajime and I... Kazuki was a blessing... and now... we want another baby...'' said Kiyomi.

"Is it a problem?" Saito questioned, he didn't see why they were worried over it.

'' Well... Aren't you... scared...?'' asked Mamoru also a bit worried. '' You were really... like a male dog protecting it's female even from an ant... You were so scared that something would happen.''

"I'm still worried, but... I want a family."

Kiyomi kissed Hajime's cheek and she put her hand on Kazuki. Chizuru was crying of hapiness and Hijikata was smiling proudly.

"One big family. It's getting bigger." Shinpachi mused.

'' Well, I don't mind... '' smiled Sanosuke. Kiyomi look at Hajime... and smiled.

"Just like that row of grey, Shinpachi." Souji teased.

Well, I saw the first grey hair as well by Sanosuke.''' said Heisuke.

Sanosuke smiled. '' Good, then I can tell the ladies I have some good expierence..''

"Same goes for Hajime-kun." Souji added and Saito stared at him.

"If so than it is solely your fault for all the stress you put me under."

'' He has no grey hair at all... '' said Kiyomi with a soft smile. He glanced at her, though he was surprised, he had been very stressed during several times. '' You don't... I even checked it last night...'' she said in a sweet and kind of naughty voice.

He raised a brow then. She placed a kiss on his cheek. He enjoyed the moment, but imgagined sooner or later he had to get back to dreaded reports.

Kazuki made a noise and Kiyomi look at him. '' And you... you need a bath...'' Saito smiled a bit. '' Mama will fill up the tub and was



your your tiny nose.'

Saito finished eating quickly and stood up. "Please excuse me, I have to check my work."

' I will see you later, Hajime.' said Kiyomi softly.

"If you need help ask for it."

' Well... noy yet... ..' she smiled

"Hm." He mused on the words as he headed out to return to his duties.

Everyone went to their duties and Kiyomi picked up Kazuki. Hijikata stood up as well. ' Need help?'

' I am not pregnant yet..'

Souji was tempted to recite a few more things.

' Well... you two... were quite...busy...' stated Hijikata careful.

Now Souji was very amused, that Hijikata would bring it up. "No doubt she's already pregnant even if she says she's not." Souji threw in.

' I...I...' she stamled.

' I bet some fantasies came true for you..' added Osen while she was feeding Katsumi.

"They've been together for a long time, how could it take this long? He must not be good at it."

' If he was not... do you really think I would make such noise...?' she said and stood up. ' And we fit perfectly to each other.'

"I have trouble beliving it."

' Thats your problem.' she said.

"Maybe so." Souji still smirked.

' And.. it is not about sex by us...'

"So quickly defensive and acusitive."

' You want to stain what is important to me and Hajime.' she said and picked up Kazuki.

"I'm just teasing, but you're quite sensitive."

' Someone is pregnant...!!' sang Mamoru and Kiyomi gave him a death glare. ' Shut up, monkey!'

"That quickly too."

' Come on guys,dont tease the girl do much.' said Sanosuke.

"Of course of course. But it's in our nature."

' ' I know... but she is hold ing my nephew...' ' said Sanosuke.

"Hm, hm." Souji leaned back. Then Kiyomi dropped her booklet, without noticing it and walked away. "Oh! Wonderful." Souji reached for it.

' ' Souji...' ' said Heisuke. ' ' Come on... Are you really hot for those stories?'

"What? You're not curious at all? I'm diappointed."

' ' Well...' ' he said.

"That's the spirit!"

' ' What she wrote more?' ' asked Kosuzu.

"Yea." Souji said.

\_ ' ' Hajime came in wounded today but it was nothing to him.

><em>

><em>His half naked body was here and there covered by blood and I needed to swallow.<em>

\_That ... was so tempting... but I only feed at my parents sometimes... I just can't ask...\_

\_Why I am so cursed... Why do I love him so much while he can't answer it... My chest is hurting... and... I want him to touch me...' '\_

"Ah, ." Souji winced a bit, it was painful that bloodlust.

' ' She was already... That's why she barely drink from us then...' ' said CHizuru.

"Hm." Souji tucked the book away.

' ' She was already... that much in... love with him...' ' said Osen softly.

"Hm. Probably even in the next thousand lives."

' ' Yea...

Souji slowly got up. "Well we'll see."

And so month's were slipping by slowly and Kiyomi was showing her belly more and more... until she was nine months... and the baby wasnt there yet... And of course it worried Saito beyond belief, he tried not to show it, but Souji oftended teased over it. That day finally arrived though and Saito spent his hours pacing until he was allowed to come in and see the girl. Stormed in by the rest of the men as well.

While Chizuru and Osen were cleaning Kiyomi was Kosuzu cleaning the girl a bit. Then she lay back their daugther in Kiyomi her arms and

the girl opened her eyes. Bright blue eyes like her fathers and hair so black as the night itself... '' There... will be fitting only one name... to you.. Yuzuki... Since I love Hajime's eyes so much... And she got his eyes... They are so beautiful and they remind me of the moon somehow... And no doubt she will be gentle as her father so... Yuzuki which mean gentle moon.''

Sanosuke showed the one year old Kazuki his little sister. '' Look kazuki, that is your little sister.''' said Sanosuke. Kazuki look at his sister and smiled.

'' Papa... Mama... Kazu happy.''' he said. Kiyomi touched her son. '' Yes, Mama and Papa are happy too.''

Of course right about now Souji was poking fun about grey hair again.

Mamoru look at Souji's and pulled a grey hair out his head. '' Look, you have one too, uncle.''' said Mamoru.

"Why you little..."

They had now an extra reason to party... the birth of Yuzuki.  
>When everyone was to bed, Hijikata sat alone in the garden, watching the moon with his haiku booklet in his hands and a brush.<p>

He was thinking of some haiku for this perfect day as Chizuru sat next to him with some sake. '' What are you writing?'' she asked.

'' Well, I was thinking about some Haiku about this perfect day. We became grandparents again.''' said Hijikata.

Chizuru lay her head on his arm. '' Can you even imagine twenty five years ago... when we first met?'' she asked and he chuckled. '' Oh yes... If we hadn't fled... There wouldn't be a family now... Ah..'' said Hijikata and lifted his brush up and started to write.

\_'' Not bounded by blood,\_  
><em>Sharing the same feelings,<em>  
><em>A real family is born.'''<em>

Chizuru smiled, seeing the words. '' So true... We are all family of each other.''' - '' Yes.''' said Hijikata.

'' I love you, Toshizo.''' - '' I love you, Chizuru.'''

They went forward and kissed each other. What had started as a innocent kiss between them, twenty five years ago... have been grown... into a wonderful family.

\* \* \*

><p>Fin~<p>

Author's notes: In the future we may have a few short bonus chapters and even a high school version, so, please continue to support us in our efforts. Thank you very much dear readers. 3

End

file.